

# THE STUDENT WORLD

A quarterly magazine published at 13 Rue Calvin, Geneva  
by the World's Student Christian Federation

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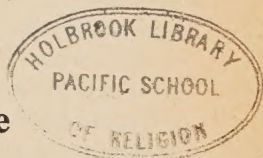
VOLUME XLIX

First Quarter, 1956

NUMBER I

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## Ecumenism and the Bible



We have not published an issue of *The Student World* on Bible study since 1949. The title of that last number was significant: "How Essential is the Bible?". Robert Mackie, in his editorial, said: "This issue of *The Student World* has been prepared as a challenge to another generation to take the Bible seriously as a book that must be read like any other fundamental text, — or, indeed, studied more thoroughly than any other, because it alone is fundamental to all true knowledge." Can we say that in the last seven years this challenge has been heard? Do students read the Bible? Is Bible study done regularly in Student Christian Movements? What is the Federation doing about Bible study?

In the three years' report on Federation activities published in 1953 we find the following: "It was clear from national Movements' reports sent to Geneva in 1949 that Bible study was having a profound effect on the lives of most of them... All over the world during the years of war and crisis people had been forced back to the source book of our faith. The great discovery in post-war Federation gatherings was the reality of this common experience and its expression in the whole program of many of our Movements... Reports coming to Geneva in 1952 indicate that such study is continuing, and the Movements are seeking to improve their methods of Bible study so that more and more students may come to recognize the Bible not merely as a great book, magnificent literature, or as an

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historical record, but to find in it the Word of God for them. All emphasize the crucial importance of Bible study in their program. It is 'the cornerstone of our Movement', according to the South African report. But most students today are perplexed about how to use the Bible. The time has largely passed when Bible reading was a common practice in homes. Young people often come to the Bible with great reverence but little knowledge. They are aware that others have found in it help and strength, but they seem unable to secure the same kind of help when they turn to it. So the Movements have come to see that their first task is to help students to use the Bible as a Book which speaks to them... We find the greatest problem in dealing with the Bible study of individual students. It can safely be said that in most countries the majority of students do not make use of the Bible in any adequate way in their personal study...

"This awakening of interest in the Bible all over the student Christian world seems to go hand in hand with a renewed interest in Christian doctrine and theology. But we have only begun to tap the resources that the Bible has for our Movements and for the lives of Christian students, and we are all becoming increasingly aware that it is only through continued Bible study permeating the whole life of the Federation and its Movements, from the international conference to the individual student in his dormitory room, that we shall find the resources to make the witness God is calling us to make."

I do not think much needs to be added to these comments made in 1953 to describe the situation of our SCMs today. There is general agreement that Bible study is "the cornerstone" of our work, and that it should therefore be an essential part of the program of every local SCM. There is even more agreement on the fact that, while all Christian students are anxious to find their spiritual nurture in the Bible, they do not know how to read it, either in groups or privately. In other words, we might say that the present generation of students is not so concerned about the basic theological questions concerning the authority of the Bible or the place of historical criticism (as was the case with previous generations and may still be with theological students), as it is about simply learning



*how* to read the book. Today the paramount issue with regard to Bible study is that of methods. Almost everywhere, in SCMs, Christian youth organizations and churches, new experiments are being made in this field, and sometimes very fruitfully. In the past we have too often been inclined to say or imply that concern for methods was exclusive of concern for truth. It would indeed be terribly serious if we were to forget truth in our concern for effective methods, but a concern for truth implies also an interest in the best way to make truth known to others, and to understand it better ourselves.

It is obvious that there is in the Federation at the present time a real interest in Bible study methods, and this was one of the two reasons which led the Federation to organize last September a Bible study conference, in cooperation with the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland. Every morning a biblical scholar or Bible study expert presented an exegesis of a passage, and, following this presentation, explained systematically to the participants the method of exegesis he had followed. Commissions worked on problems of group work and study technics, and their reports are published in this issue of *The Student World*. It is clear that this conference did not provide any solution to the need felt in so many quarters for an analysis of new methods and the discovery of some standard technic of Bible study; it aimed only to stimulate thinking and provoke further study.

The other reason for the organization of this conference also takes me back to 1953. During the World Conference of Christian Youth held at Kottayam, India, and at the Federation General Committee which followed at Nasrapur, several Orthodox delegates, and also some Roman Catholic participants, raised the question of the ecumenical validity of Bible study as it is commonly done in the Federation and other international Christian organizations. I remember some very lively conversations we had then, and the frank, and sometimes sharp, words of some of our Orthodox friends (after all, it is our right, and even our duty, to be sharp with one another when truth is at stake, and when we are meeting together as brothers whom God has made responsible for one another). Some of them complained that they were victims of a Protestant *coup de force* when they

found themselves compelled to study the Bible outside of the visible fellowship of the Orthodox Church, without the presence of any authorized interpreter of the Church's *magisterium*. It was then decided that the planned conference should approach the problem of Bible study in an ecumenical setting.

This number of *The Student World* includes not only some of the addresses given at this conference and the reports of its commissions, but also a rather full record of two panel discussions led by three speakers, a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox and a Protestant. It has not been possible to give a stenographic record of the discussion, but its substance has been preserved as far as possible. The report of the conference said: "Certainly for all participants, the gulf which separates Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants was realized. But the real value came in facing these differences, not escaping them. Both leaders and participants witnessed boldly to their own traditions, but also in humility listened to hear what the others were saying. It was Dr. Visser 't Hooft who said in the panel on 'The Bible in an Ecumenical Setting': 'The ecumenical movement is based upon the conviction that truth is dynamic, and that as we expose ourselves to this dynamic, again and again there will come moments when we can hear voices across the chasm.' There is good evidence to the effect that, through this Bible study conference, voices were heard across the chasm."

There is still much work needed if a solution is to be found to the problem of Bible study in interconfessional meetings, but this conference was a significant experience for its participants. We hope that the publication of some of its addresses and discussions will give our readers an opportunity to share something of this experience, although a full ecumenical experience can take place only when there is face-to-face encounter between members of the divided parts of the Church. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Bossey conference was its demonstration that Bible study in an ecumenical setting, however difficult, is possible and bears fruit. Let us hope that the example set there will be followed widely in the Federation and the Church.

PH. M.



# The Unity of the Two Testaments

H. H. WOLF

We speak of the Bible as one book, which consists, however, of the Old Testament and the New Testament. We speak about the book of books, and we mean the one book in two volumes. Does the fact that it is in two volumes present a problem for us ?

In this book there are certain passages with which we are familiar, passages which speak to us quite apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit, who is the key to the understanding of this whole book. These passages are scattered throughout the Bible ; they are to be found not only in the New Testament but also in the Old. The Psalms, for instance, are for many their personal prayer-book ; the words of the Prophets speak to some as directly and with as much authority as do those of Jesus Himself, or as the words of the Apostles do to others. To some the Old Testament seems more down to earth than the New, and seems to speak more concretely to the problems of everyday life.

But, on the other hand, if the space in our suitcase is limited, we content ourselves with taking along a copy of the New Testament, or perhaps an edition which also contains the Psalms — the Old Testament alone would not seem quite sufficient. When we have to interpret, or preach about, the Old Testament, and come upon passages in Leviticus and Numbers, or even some in Job, the Psalms and the Prophets, the difficulties of exegesis seem to be greater than those we encounter in reading the Gospels or other parts of the New Testament. Then the question arises : is not the Old Testament concerned with a totally different kind of redemption ? Is it logical for these two volumes to be together in one book ? What is the relation between the Old Testament and the New ? What about the unity of, and differences between, the two Testaments ?

In the course of church history this question has frequently recurred, and many possible solutions have been proposed, from a strict differentiation between the Old Testament and the New, together with the suggestion that the Old be abolished, to an identification of the two Testaments, with no distinction between them. Especially in Germany, we have seen a very extreme attitude towards the Old Testament ; it was simply declared to be the "book of the Jews" and, therefore, irrelevant for Christianity.

### *Our starting-point*

In discussing the problem of the unity of the two Testaments, our first question must be : what is the right starting-point ? What position must we take if we are to venture into such a discussion ?

Several different positions have been tried in the course of church history. One possibility is to start from a neutral position. A disinterested and objective observer looking at the Old and New Testaments may come to one of several very different conclusions : he may see either a more or less close connection, or a more or less important difference, between the two. This attitude may be adopted by a scholar in the history of religions, who has set himself the task of investigating the unity of, and differences between, the documents of the so-called "Christian religion". Or a Christian may undertake the same task, feeling bound, for the sake of the scientific approach, to set aside the fact that he is a Christian and, without any presuppositions or prejudices, to devote himself entirely to this task. I rather doubt, however, that it is at all possible to approach our problem from such a starting-point. Does such a neutrality really exist ? Can I set aside the fact that I am a Christian in order to be better fitted to accomplish a task ? I think it is important that we realize clearly from the beginning that, as a Christian, I cannot forget even for a moment that everything I say about God and the world must presuppose my membership in the Church. What does this mean in our context ?

Whatever it means to "be a Christian", whatever it means to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, of that Church



which the New Testament calls the Body of Christ, we must not forget that it was Jesus Christ Himself who opened our eyes through the Word of the Gospel, who made us understand who God is, what He is for us, what He did for us ; who made us realize the origin and purpose of our life, and that it is in God's hands. If we are in Christ, we have no other choice than to understand our life from His point of view, and to see the world in which we live in God's perspective. Certainly there are other ways of seeing it. But since we have encountered Christ, since we have been involved in His death and resurrection, we cannot but see ourselves and the world around us in this way. It is for His sake that we attach such great importance to the apostolic witness in the New Testament, which tells us about Him. It is because we meet Him there that it assumes for us the status of a witness to Christ. Furthermore, it is because we know that behind the witness of the Apostles there is the promise, "He who hears you hears me" (Luke 10 : 16), that this witness is of such primary importance for us. Therefore we can only discuss the question of the unity of the two Testaments from the point of view of people who belong to Christ, and not from a neutral, objective standpoint. We must begin this discussion from the following point : Jesus Christ, the Lord of His Church, is the only authority who can pronounce upon the unity of, or the difference between, the two Testaments.

### *The Old Testament as a witness to Christ*

We find Jesus Christ in the apostolic witness of the New Testament. But this witness refers at many points to the Old Testament. Take, for instance, John 5 : 39 or 5 : 46, or II Corinthians 3 : 15 ff., the latter a passage in which Paul speaks about the understanding of the two Testaments in their unity and difference. And there are many other similar passages. The one which seems to me to be the most important and relevant for our problem is Luke 24 : 13 ff. The risen Lord is on His way to Emmaus with two of His disciples, who do not understand what has happened, and who do not recognize Him. In the course of the conversation He directs them to the Old Testament which can throw light upon what happened to Christ (v. 27). So the Old

Testament illuminates for them the meaning of the central events of the New Testament: Christ had to suffer and rise. Had to: meaning that here was realized a plan of God which had been laid down, over and above God's covenant, with the creation of the world. We can suppose that in this conversation Christ reminded them particularly of certain passages in the Old Testament which expressed in their own way this witness to His suffering and resurrection. From the rest of the New Testament, and especially from the Gospel of Luke, we get an idea of the passages He had in mind. He was probably thinking of what we call today the "messianic prophecies", for example, Isaiah 9; 11; 53; Psalm 22; Deuteronomy 18, and so forth. However, it seems to me that the important thing is that here the reference to various passages in the Old Testament opens to the understanding of the disciples the Scriptures which previously had been closed to them (cf. v. 32). The whole New Testament is opened to them; everything in it, even if in detail it may not witness to Christ at all, is directed towards this central point — the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ according to God's original design. However, this is only one part of the revelation given by the risen Lord. The other part — which is inseparable from the first — is the possibility He gives them of understanding the Old Testament as a witness to Him. He opens the hearts of those who seek for understanding. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" (v. 32). "Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (v. 45). The "opening" of the Scriptures and the "opening" of the mind to an understanding of the Scriptures are closely connected. For the disciples the Old Testament is only open when they know who the Stranger is who accompanied them. They recognize Him when He breaks the bread. They see that He who is standing before them, the risen Lord, is the same who had broken the bread for them some days before His death. The encounter with the Christ who died, rose and lives for us leads us into the open Old Testament, an Old Testament which, like the New, can only be understood through the words of Jesus.

We must add to this some illustrations from other passages which show how, on the basis of what happened at Emmaus, the early Christians used the Old Testament. Take, for example,



the sermon of Stephen in Acts 7, or Acts 26 : 22-23. I think those things which are revealed in Luke 24 are also to be found in II Corinthians 3, which, however, is written in Paul's terminology. He first speaks of the great contrast between the two covenants, a contrast which exists as long as the Old Testament is read without Christ, until He has lifted the veil from the Old Testament itself and from the hearts of the readers.

In other words, in the encounter with the living Christ, He Himself creates the unity of the Testaments by teaching us to understand the Old Testament as a witness to Himself.

### *Misuse of the Old Testament*

But it is evidently possible also to understand the Old Testament differently, as did the disciples before they met the risen Lord, and as, in the time of Jesus, did the scribes, who finally used it to prove that this Jesus was an insurrectionist. We might say that Jesus was crucified through, and because of, the Old Testament ; men undertook to prove by it that it was a ridiculous presumption to call oneself the Son of God. Is it not a curious paradox : Jesus Christ is crucified in the name of the Old Testament, illustrating its sinful abuse as well as its proper use in its prophetic significance. The Jews in the time of Jesus read the Old Testament in a way which led them to expect a Messiah who was quite different from this Jesus Christ. Today they are still waiting for this Messiah, and they still nourish this expectation by reading the Old Testament. Indeed, everything depends on the encounter with the living Jesus Christ. Those who do not meet Him cannot speak of the unity of the two Testaments as we have spoken of it here.

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We cannot speak about the unity of the two Testaments without at the same time speaking about their differences, for it seems evident that the Old Testament bears a different witness to Christ than does the New.

*The old and the new covenants*

The first difference is that the two Testaments are concerned with two different covenants. The word testament means covenant. There is the old covenant and the new : the covenant which God made with His chosen people Israel, and the new covenant which is for the whole world, which is not limited to one people at a particular time in a particular country. We say that God's whole act of redemption happens in history, and we speak of the history of salvation. This means that we can see in the whole Bible God's progressive action : from covenant to covenant, down to the new covenant which is mentioned in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 ; the covenant with Noah, with Abraham, the covenant on Sinai, and the new covenant. Oscar Cullman, in his book, *Christ and Time*, speaks about a "salvation line", which is determined by the principle of election and substitution : God calls the creation to be His ; He chooses a people from among many to be His own ; they resist ; finally only a remnant of Israel remains ; these few are ultimately reduced to one Person, the "Servant of Jehovah", suffering in our stead, the "Son of Man" (Daniel). This Man enters history in the Person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and becomes, in His vicarious suffering and death, the salvation of the world. Humanity, the people of Israel, the remnant, the One, Christ — perhaps we can see the history of salvation in the Old Testament in this progressive reduction. In the New Testament we find the reversal of the process. From the One it goes to the many : Christ, the Church, redeemed humanity in the Kingdom of God, redeemed creation of the new heaven and the new earth.

*The coming Christ and the Christ who has come*

Both covenants are concerned with Christ. The witness in the two covenants, in the Old Testament and the New, is a witness to Christ. But once we have encountered Him, who has involved us in His death and resurrection, we must distinguish between the coming Christ and the Christ who has come. The



Old Testament speaks about the coming Christ ; it is oriented towards the historical date of the Incarnation. The era of the Old Testament, the history of the covenant, is a preparation for this event, which must be called the centre of this history, or rather, the end of this history. The Old Testament is concerned with the time of expectation. There is much in the New Testament which helps us to understand this fact : what Paul says in his letter to the Colossians, for example, about Christ and the creation.

When we speak about the coming or promised Christ to whom the Old Testament bears witness, we are not thinking only of some special passages which we call the "messianic prophecies", of certain passages from the Psalms, the Prophets or the Pentateuch. We have in mind the whole history of Israel, which is oriented towards the coming Christ, which could not continue if He did not finally come. This history could not exist at all if He, the coming Christ, had not been, from the beginning of the history of Israel, from the beginning of creation, the purpose of everything that happened, and if the entire history had not been borne by Him.

The New Testament, on the other hand, speaks of the Christ who has already come, who promises His renewed coming every day, and who proclaims His final Second Coming. In connection with the main theme of the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches, we distinguished Christ's three-fold coming in this sense : the Old Testament looks ahead and waits for the event ; the New Testament, on the one hand looks back to what has already happened and, on the other, looks ahead to what will happen over and over again, and to what will happen in the end.

The New Testament expresses this distinction by using the difference between the object and its shadow, the comparison of promise and fulfilment, or better, promise and fulfilled promise, in order to show that even in the new covenant we do not yet see, but believe, that we wait for the full and yet hidden revelation. Reality and shadow ! The shadow is not yet the reality, but there would be no shadow if the reality did not have its place in the background, its historically fixed place, fixed in the coming of Christ.

### *Ministries and worship ceremonies*

The Old Testament has its own way of witnessing to the coming Christ, which is different from the witness to the Christ who has come. There are certain people in the Old Testament — kings, priests, prophets, for example — who occupy a special place in the history of Israel : kings like Saul or David, priests like Melchisedec or Aaron, prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah. But these men are representatives of a ministry which is much greater than they are themselves, and which they cannot completely fulfil. Through the ministry of the priest of the old covenant, as well as through that of the king or of the prophet, there speaks more than just the person who performs this ministry, there speaks one who is greater than the historic representative of this ministry. The ministry of the king, for instance, is a reflection of another bearer of this ministry who is more than all of them throughout history. One can also say that the kings, priests and prophets of the old covenant point beyond themselves towards a Figure who is in front of them, but at the same time behind them, in whom all the ministries of the old covenant are united and accomplished. For Jesus Christ is King, Priest and Prophet, and accomplishes in one Person all the functions which, in the old covenant, had been represented by different historical personalities.

This is true also for certain ceremonies of worship in the old covenant, for festivals and days of rest, sacrifices and the rites of the Passover. These too point beyond themselves to something which will happen one day and make them all superfluous : to Jesus Christ's sacrificial death. The same is true for certain events in the old covenant, such as the exodus from Egypt ; it is true for the whole history of the people of Israel, sometimes called "the history of God with His son" (Ex. 4 : 23 ; Deut. 8 : 5). These events are significant not only in their own time and place, but they also link the people with a future event which is already effective, then and there, in the old covenant. Therefore, we find already in the Old Testament forgiveness *propter Christum venturum*, and even eternal life *propter Christum venturum*. On the other hand, it is true that the people in the Old Testament only wait and long for it.



The New Testament witnesses to Christ, a testimony which has come through human witnesses. First they are the eye-witnesses of Jesus, and then they are the kings, priests and prophets in a new sense. That is what Peter evidently means in his first letter when he calls the people of God the congregation of Christ, the "royal priesthood" (I Peter 2: 9). The congregation itself performs the ministries which were borne by individuals in the Old Testament, and the new bearers of the ministry look back to something which happened, and at the same time ahead to something which will happen. The worship ceremonies of the Old Testament have been replaced by new ones: the Word and the Sacraments. And the history of the people as a foreshadowing of what is to come has been replaced by the history of the Church which reflects Christ in its own way.

#### *The law in the Old and New Testaments*

The last difference we shall mention concerns the law. In the centre of the old covenant is God's law. The divine "thou shalt" is surrounded by God's merciful promise, "I am the Lord, thy God". This law has to be understood as a statute of the covenant, as a statute for those with whom God, of His own accord, has made an alliance, and which must be obeyed by the chosen people.

The New Testament, too, knows the law of God and mentions it in many places: the same law that God gave to the people of the old covenant, and which maintains its validity after God has offered His redemption to the whole world. The New Testament, too, is concerned that this law should be obeyed, but obeyed because of the fulfilment realized by Christ in His obedience to the law. In this obedience, with which only the believer is charged, the law's judgment of disobedience is overcome in Christ. Therefore the believer can begin to live in spontaneous faith.

#### *Incongruity of the Testaments*

In each of these four differences we find a greater or lesser affinity and likeness between the Old Testament and the New, or at least an inner relationship which results from the illumin-

ation of the Old Testament by Christ. In the first part we spoke of the unity of the Testaments in their existing differences ; we have now spoken of the differences within their continuing unity.

But it must also be said that, in addition to this congruity of the Testaments, there is also an incongruity which we cannot force into harmony. It is connected with what we have called the progressive history of salvation. We have said that God progresses in His action from covenant to covenant, from event to event, and that each of His new acts is in a way incongruous with the previous one, although this does not destroy the continuity. This leads to many questions which are hard to answer : in how far do events in the New Testament really reach back into the Old and find a kind of anticipation there ?

### *Significance of the Old Testament*

If the unity of the two Testaments is thus a unity within existing differences, why do we need the Old Testament at all, since we have such fulness in the New Testament, as much fulness as men can have in this world ? Is there any reason for keeping the Old Testament, if the preparation has been replaced by realization, the promise by fulfilment, or at least by the fulfilled promise ?

Here we must first reply : it is not for us to choose. If Jesus Christ Himself establishes the relationship with the Old Testament, then we cannot think it superfluous. The life and coming of Christ who redeems us is connected with this previous history which God had thus ordained. Those who do not want to accept this previous history attack the fact that the coming of Christ is rooted in a special history, and thereby threaten to transform Him into something which He is not. The coming of Christ is once and for all linked with a certain plan of redemption which from the beginning points towards His death and resurrection. Therefore the Old Testament is more than the background necessary to an understanding of the New. The New Testament tells us that Jesus is the Messiah, but the Old Testament reveals to us what that means.

When the New Testament says (II Cor. 1 : 20), "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him", this evidently means



that God's promises of the old covenant have been realized in Christ, because in Him the Kingdom of God, about which God is concerned, has gained a foothold on earth. The Old Testament stresses the this-worldliness of God's promise, even though the Kingdom of God today is no longer made manifest in the same outward forms which it assumed in the Old Testament for the limited period of the old covenant. In the new covenant we are free from all these special tasks and obligations. We are in danger, under the influence of the New Testament, of spiritualizing the Kingdom of God, but we must not forget that it is said : "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

But, furthermore, the Old Testament has a special significance for us, because it reminds us of the fact that Christ is coming, that the Christian Church is a waiting Church, a Church which goes out to meet Him even though He has come, and is ever present in Word and Sacrament. Here the witness of the Old Testament looks beyond the Incarnation to the Second Coming of Christ in judgment and for the transformation of the world.

The relationship which the risen Lord has established between the two Testaments enables us now to understand the history of the chosen people, not only as the particular history of the people of Israel, but as the history of man as such. It is the history of men of all time, our own history as well, the history of men who meet a God who seeks them untiringly and wants to keep them in His covenant, even though the relationship to salvation has been altered.

### *Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*

In Bible study we shall ask the question : what does all this mean for our practical approach to the Old Testament ? How do we interpret it ? If we use the New Testament as the basic document in our discussions, I would say we should keep in mind that it seems to be very free in its approach, and to indicate several different ways of interpreting the Old Testament. It is seen as :

1. A witness to God's promise, but the distinction between promise and fulfilment in Christ is strongly accentuated.

2. A witness to the promise, the fulfilment of which is already proclaimed in the Old Testament itself.

3. A witness to the promise which, even after its fulfilment in the New Testament, remains a promise.

4. A witness to the promise, the effects of whose fulfilment are already anticipated.

5. A witness to the promise which confirms and sanctions the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. In this way it is no longer understood as a testimony of expectation, but as a document of fulfilment.

We shall certainly not always be able to follow the New Testament in its different interpretations of the Old. After serious study our interpretation of some passages may differ from that of the New Testament. This is part of the human character of the witness to Jesus Christ as we have it in the two books. It is not the different interpretations of the New Testament which are binding for the Christian Church, but the basic attitude of the New Testament towards the Old. What is essential is the relation of both Testaments to the coming of Christ. This relation demands, for exegesis, the juxtaposition of different approaches which show the unity of, and difference between, the two Testaments. It is impossible to find one simple and clear formula for the exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, probably because of the living secret hidden in both.



# The Bible and Personal Ethics

D. T. NILES

## *"In Christ"*

Let us begin by reminding ourselves that the Bible is a testimony to Jesus and is intended to persuade us to believe in Him and to have life in His name. Personal ethical living begins there. It is the consequence of being in Christ, members of His Body, branches that abide in the Vine. It says in the prologue to St. John's Gospel, "As many as came to him, to them he gave authority", or, in other words, to them He gave permission, or, to them he opened a way, to become children of God. Through Jesus Christ a new possibility of existence has been opened up for us. In a very literal sense, it becomes possible to live in Jesus Christ, to live within Him. In St. Paul, the phrase "in Christ" is practically synonymous with the phrase "in the Church", "in the Body of Christ". The Church is the place where the healing processes of Christ are at work, as we find in the first chapter of Ephesians. Before we can talk about the responsibility of a Christian for personal ethical living, we must insist that this person be a Christian, that is, a person who is in Christ. That involves two things: first, that he be in the family of the Church, and that he learn daily more and more to take his place within the family, identifying himself with it, and accepting all its members as people whom he cannot reject. You cannot pick and choose your brothers and sisters: they belong.

This process of identifying oneself with the Church is important. Some of you may remember that, when Dr. Visser 't Hooft decided to be ordained, he wrote a letter to some of his friends in which he said, "I want to be more closely identified with the shame and distress of the Church, and therefore I am seeking ordination." This was his way of self-identification.

## *Confrontation with Christ*

Secondly, Christianity today is a separate religion only because Jesus rose from the dead, and the whole significance of the resurrection for us is that we can therefore meet Him. In

other words, if we had never had the confrontation with Jesus Christ, the question of Christian ethical living would not arise. It results, on the one hand, from this personal confrontation between a person and the risen Christ, and on the other, as that person finds his place in the life of Christ's Body. But what is the relationship of the Bible to this? The Bible is the place where we meet the Lord, where we hear Him speak to us, where we meet the community of saints. Some of you will remember the preface to *Letters to Young Churches* by J. B. Phillips, in which he says that when he was paraphrasing the Epistles he felt as if he were trying to mend an electric light system without being able to shut off the current. In other words, they were alive. Whenever you handle the Bible, you get that feeling. This is not a dead book; it is alive, and you may get a shock at any time.

Personal ethical living is the consequence of something having happened to you. It is a "therefore". "I am the Lord, thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt; therefore, thou shalt have no other Gods before me; therefore, thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother; therefore, thou shalt not commit adultery." The Ten Commandments are a therefore, because God has already done something. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God; therefore, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." The command arises out of the previous truth that God has acted on our behalf. We have heard the Word of the Lord saying to us: "I know you by name, you are mine." "Remember the rock from whence you were hewn and the pit from which you were dug." "Therefore, walk worthily of your calling." "Behave in such a way that you may be children of your father who is in heaven." "Let your light so shine that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." In other words, the ethical demands are made and understood in terms of who we are. These demands are made of us because we are His children, redeemed by Christ, because we are soldiers of Christ, pilgrims and messengers. And who we are, and what we are is determined by what God has done for us.



*"Therefore"*

What forms does this ethical demand take for us as persons ? Here I would like to divide the ethical demand that comes to us as persons into six different areas which we must face when we think about the obedience we have to render as Christians. The first is this : "You have passed from darkness to light ; therefore, give up the works of darkness." Do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not be lascivious, and so forth. All the bad things that you must not do are listed. This, of course, is true of all religions. You do not have to be a Christian to be told, "Do not steal". If you are a Hindu, you will be told, "Do not steal". If you are a Buddhist you will be told, "Do not commit adultery". The only difference is that for Christians the moral life is a "therefore", while for others it is an "in order to". In Hinduism the moral life is preparation for salvation. In Christianity it is a consequence of salvation.

*Surgical operations*

The second area in which the ethical demand comes to us is that of our own particular nature. Each of us is made differently. Each has his own weakness and temptation, and each has to deal with the ethical demand in terms of himself. Jesus says to us, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out ; if thy hand offend thee, cut it off ; if thy foot offend thee, cut it off". But He certainly said also, "I came that you might have life, and have it to the full". When you meet a person who has never found it necessary to perform any of these surgical operations on himself, you begin to wonder whether he is living the ethical life. I personally have a feeling that there is some part of every life, of my life and of yours, of which Jesus says, "Pluck it out", "Cut it off". It is much better that this weakness should be completely eradicated than that you should simply seek grace to deal with it. For example, take a man who is rather poor who is treasurer of the church. Now and again he is tempted to take church money for his own use, hoping to replace it the next month. Then he may be unable to replace it the next month, and only with some difficulty is the matter put right. And he goes through this process again and again. It would be much

better for him to refuse to be the treasurer of public funds, than to say, "God will give me grace to overcome this temptation". There are certain temptations which it is better for us never to face. I have an idea that one of St. Paul's areas of difficulty was that he did not know how to get along with women. And so he never got married — a very sensible idea! Each of us has to find out for himself where his weaknesses lie, and what surgical operations he must perform on his life.

### *Discipline of soldiering*

The third area is that which is concerned with the discipline of the soldier. You remember St. Paul saying in his letter to Timothy, "A soldier does not get entangled in civilian pursuits". We are all soldiers and are, therefore, involved in the positive and the negative discipline of soldiering. The positive is easy enough to explain. If you are going to be a soldier, one of the main things is to keep in contact with your commander; otherwise you won't receive orders, you won't know what to do. In other words, you have to keep your prayer life and your Bible study going. You must continue to go to church and to enjoy Christian fellowship. The negative discipline is equally important. Many of us find time and money for everything that other people are interested in. For example, I am a Christian, and my next-door neighbour is a Hindu. He is a good man, a religious man. I am the same kind of person. I earn about the same amount of money as he does. His children go to the pictures so many times a week; my children go the same number of times. He has time to do this and that. I have time for the same things. I am able to live the same normal life that everyone else lives, and with the balance of money and time I want to build the Kingdom of God. It can't be done! The Bible says you cannot expect to do it. In other words, the soldier's life demands that you learn to give up good things, and not only bad things, and it is in giving up the good things that the problems arise. You remember the story of Jesus about the man who spent a good deal of time and trouble collecting pearls. When he had collected a large number, he came across a big pearl. He sold all the pearls that he had, in order to get the



pearl of great price. It is not uncommon to meet with Christian people who say "But why should you give it up, it's a pearl!" Of course it's a pearl. But you have to give it up if you want the other pearl.

### *That the brother may not stumble*

The fourth area in which the demand comes to us for personal ethical living is that of renunciation for the sake of those to whom we seek to commend the Gospel. To use the Pauline phrase, "in order that the brother for whom Jesus died may not stumble". There are certain things you must not do, not because it will do you any harm, but because it will harm the person whom you are trying to win for Jesus Christ. Let me give you an example. We have in Ceylon an ashram, which is a kind of a community. In the ashram everyone is a vegetarian, because the ashram is open to anyone who wants to come, and many Hindus who are vegetarians will come and eat, if they know that this is normally a place where everyone eats only vegetables. Now you may say, "There is nothing harmful, or sinful, in eating meat, and the Christian ought somehow to tell the Hindu that there is no harm in it. The Hindu is quite wrong to have such ideas." I remember my father telling me about the missionaries of his day saying, "So-and-so is very near conversion because he has begun to eat mutton". Take my own case. I was born and brought up in my part of the world. When I first came to Europe some years ago I went to the home of Pierre Maury for a meal. He produced wine. I said, "I don't drink wine", and he said, "Well, Niles, you don't know the freedom of the Gospel". Now it may be one's Christian duty in France to teach people that it is possible to drink in moderation. It certainly is not in Ceylon. There are certain renunciations in which you are involved because you want to commend the Gospel.

### *Disciplines of a calling*

Fifthly, there are the disciplines in which you are involved because of your special calling in the Christian Church. Suppose you are a preacher. You must study, you must have a certain

amount of time every day for your books, to study your Bible, to use your concordance, not to forget the Greek you once learned in theological college. There is a discipline involved if you find yourself taking part in the healing ministry of the Church. It is a discipline that everyone must find for himself. I have a friend, an Anglican minister, who joined the guild of healing of the church and who used to hold healing services with anointing and the laying on of hands. He said to me one day, "You know that I have normally used a certain amount of liquor as a beverage along with my meals. There is nothing wrong or sinful about it. But I find that I have to give it up, if I am to engage in this ministry of healing." It is no good asking him for theological reasons. The whole point of personal living is that it is personal. It is the kind of thing that you are involved in because you are you. And one of our usual alibis in refusing this discipline is to say it is not wrong. So-and-so can do it, and therefore I can do it. However, the issue is not that someone else can or cannot do it, but simply this: you are you, and for the kind of calling to which you have been called, what are the disciplines that are necessary?

### *Love as response to rejection*

Lastly, there is the problem of carrying the Cross. The Cross is not the results, the problems, the difficulties, the dangers we encounter as the result of living the Christian life. The Cross of Jesus was the result of His insisting on loving people who said to Him, "We don't want to have anything to do with you, get out!" That is why He had to have a Cross. The Cross is the result of love as the response to rejection, and in each of our lives there is surely the experience of the Cross. If we have reached the place where everyone accepts us, then Jesus says: "Woe unto you", because then you do not need the Cross. We have somehow adjusted ourselves so that we move smoothly and manage to escape the Cross. Jesus says, "If you are that kind of person there is something very seriously wrong with you". That does not mean that we must make ourselves as unpleasant as possible, so that people will say, "We don't want to have anything to do with you, get out". But any Christian will



normally again and again come up against situations where either a person or a group will say, "I have nothing to do with you, get out". When you are faced by rejection, you answer that rejection with love, and therefore you carry your cross. The problem of ethical living at that point is very difficult. It is very difficult to carry your cross without feeling what a good fellow you are, and then the whole thing collapses.

### *An area of freedom*

The Bible does not give us rules or principles for all these areas where we meet with ethical demands. All it does is to fix the climate in which we live. It teaches us what it means to pass from darkness to light, what soldiering means. But if you are to live like this, you must learn to live without feeling either religious or moral. How does a Christian do this? I think all of us have glimpsed the answer now and again in our own lives. It is to maintain within one's life, at the centre of it if possible, an area of freedom from any of these disciplines: to learn to live fundamentally in the passive rather than the active voice, not doing certain things but being a certain kind of person. Take a home, which is a very good example of a place where people normally, naturally live in the passive voice. A husband does not live in the active voice, behaving as a person who is obligated to love his wife and children. He lives in the passive voice, as a person who is loved by his wife and children. My children do not get up in the morning and say, "Now today we must love father and mother". They simply behave as people who are loved by father and mother. It is because in a home everyone lives in the passive voice that the demands of the home are met. In other words, ethical living becomes possible because it is never attempted. It simply results from the fact that the centre of the home is an area of complete inner freedom, where love is taken for granted. If our Christian life can be built, not on the basis of "I must love God and my neighbour", but of "God loves me", then the ethical demand can be met without our saying to ourselves, "I am an ethical person". I think that is what Jesus meant when he said, "Having done all to say, 'I am an unfaithful servant'".

# The Bible and Evangelism

JOHANNES HAMEL

Our problem is called the "Red Ox". I must explain that a little. In an old university town of my country the "Red Ox" really exists. It was built in the nineteenth century for the purpose it still serves, and has not been changed. It is about 500 yards long, 500 yards wide and, on the average, thirty yards high. You can see it from many points of the town. No one wants to enter the "Red Ox", and when one is in it, it is not easy to get out again quickly. Thousands of people live in this old block of buildings, erected under the Prussian kings. In the "Red Ox" you cannot do what you like; you have to do what you are told. The people there are not very cheerful, but rather a little sad. There are several hundred inmates of the "Red Ox" who have power over the others. They are obeyed, but without joy. And more and more people enter it against their will. Anyone who has once been in the "Red Ox" is always very much afraid of going there again. As all of you have certainly realized by now, I am talking about a big penitentiary which for seventy years has been commonly called the "Red Ox" because of its red brick walls.

Our problem as Christians is that we often turn the Bible into a "Red Ox". We turn it into a big, thick book, and there are several hundred people in each church who know all about it. And they call everyone else to come under the supreme authority of this book. "You must do what the book says, and what we tell you out of the book. If you do not do what the book says, it is very bad for you. But, nevertheless, not altogether bad. For if you are completely desperate because of your disobedience, there is forgiveness. But if you are too wayward, you will come to a bad end. Therefore, you had better obey us and the book." And the people who listen to and accept this are the church people. Church people have one special characteristic. Let me illustrate it with an example. In Heidelberg there was once a big student banquet, and everyone was sitting at long tables. After half

an hour it was announced that each student was to introduce the man on his right, giving his name, age, origin and faculty. So the first got up and said : "I don't know anything yet about my neighbour, but he is certainly a theological student." And when everyone asked him : "How do you know ?", he answered : "He has such a strained look". So the characteristic of church people is that they lead a very "tense" life. And so those who are not church people come to say : the Bible takes all the joy out of life. A great many Christians are trying all the time to turn the Bible, which is really a book of joy, into a "Red Ox". This is exactly what the Jewish rabbis did, only they were a little better at it, calling the people to obey the law of Moses. You can read all about it in a very fine book by Alan Paton, *Too Late the Phalarope*, which gives an excellent description of how, in a pious family, the Bible is turned into a "Red Ox", so that the word of joy cannot be heard and cannot save.

### *Biblical barrage*

What, on the contrary, does evangelism mean in the Bible ? Again I want to use a picture, this time a military one : the barrage. By barrage you understand the concentration of a lot of artillery on one target, and at one precise moment all the guns fire together at this target. In the New Testament there is such a barrage in that all the prophesies of the Old Testament are realized now. St. Matthew repeats over and over again : "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet..." And the man who wrote this was not a scholar who had carefully gone through the Old Testament to find proofs for the story of Jesus, but a deeply troubled Apostle who had experienced with fear and trembling what God had announced to the Fathers. Now the promise is fulfilled. The first Christians are surrounded by God's words in the Old Testament. If I may change my picture a little : all the biblical characters in the Old Testament are like guns ; each witness fires : Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Prophets, Moses, Elijah, David ; each time there is an explosion. But the impact of these shells is felt by the Apostles in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you look at the first chapter of St. Matthew



you will find that he is trying to express the same idea in the first sixteen verses. These verses draw the line from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian exile, and from the exile down to Joseph and Mary. Each time there are fourteen generations. With this figurative language Matthew wants to say : the whole history of God with Israel had one single purpose, and that purpose has *now* been achieved. In Acts 2, when the people say : "You are drunk", Peter, strangely enough, does not begin to preach about Jesus, but begins by saying : "I am going to tell you what happened just now when the Apostles spoke in tongues. Here you have concretely before you what God said to the prophet Joel : and it shall come to pass in the last days. . . ." So the beginning of his preaching is a proclamation of what happened *now*.

### *The living voice*

What happened ? What is this barrage like ? "The feet of him who brings good tidings" (Is. 52 : 7) and the living voice (John 5 : 25) have come. The new event, the explosion of divine dynamite, is a continuing event. It is an historical fact which is expressed in the New Testament by the Greek word *keryssein*. This means to herald. You can also take the Greek word *euangelizestai*, which means to pass on the good news, or to inform, to announce, to bring word, to proclaim, to evangelize. Through the explosion a group of messengers comes into existence, who loudly proclaim the message all over the world. The creation of these messengers is the great miracle produced by the barrage. They are first the twelve Apostles, and, following them, the Church, the *ecclesia*. We frequently think : "What is new in the Gospel is its content, that God is merciful, that God forgives." But the primary new thing about the Gospel is the fact that it is spoken, that it is uttered aloud, that it is announced to all people : that is the great miracle.

### *The power of the word*

A completely new situation has arisen, once this voice has resounded. We know the word *euangelizestai*, to proclaim the good news, from our study of history. When, for instance, a

new emperor had ascended the throne, the heralds of the Roman empire brought the good news, the *euangelion*, to every town: "Titus has become Emperor!" And once this message was uttered aloud, the emperor's power over the town became a reality. The message contained the *dynamis*, the power of the emperor himself; everyone in the town was placed under his authority. Or let us think of the word *keryssein*, which means the announcement of the messenger entering a Greek town saying: "After me comes the king!" And at the moment when the message is spoken aloud, the whole situation is changed. For now the chief preoccupation of everyone in the town is the fact that the king is coming. You know what that means in the Near East: when the king comes, the pools in the middle of the path must be filled with earth, and the rough places must be flattened out. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Or think of the famous messenger who was sent after the battle of Marathon to Athens, twenty-seven miles away, and was just able to cry in the market-place of this town, "*Nike* — Victory", before he fell dead. And when the word *nike* rang out, the situation of the people of Athens was completely changed. Through this one word, the balance of power had been shifted. Fear had lost its power, joy had taken its place. And as a modern example, think of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. A man is unjustly imprisoned by a count, the lord of the castle. His wife, disguised as a soldier, has been accepted as a servant to the jailer and hopes somehow to save her husband. In the last act, the catastrophe occurs. The count has ordered the prisoner beheaded. She has to accompany the jailer and prepare everything for the execution. In the last moment she flings herself between the jailer and her husband and cries: "I am his wife. You shall not kill him." And the answer is: "Then I will kill you both." And at this very moment you hear trumpets blowing in the distance announcing the arrival of the king who will judge justly and free the man. The sound of these trumpets changes the whole situation. Everything is still the same: there is the sword in the hand of the jailer, and he has the power to kill, but the trumpets announcing the arrival of the king, who is also the lord of the count, change the situation. Rescue is at hand.

With these four examples I wanted to illustrate what really happens when we preach and evangelize in the name of Jesus. A fact is announced, which is so enormously important that the situation of those who hear this proclamation is changed by its simple pronouncement, because the announced event is the event of events. Where the Gospel is preached, the power of the demons is broken, sins are forgiven, God's wrath is changed into love and kindness, prisoners are set free, and the sorrowful rejoice. To carry the message of the Gospel means nothing less than that.

### *Christ is the fact of the message*

What is the fact of the message? I purposely do not say the content of the message, but the fact, the reality behind the message. And here we in the different churches have discovered something during these last decades that our fathers strangely enough did not see in the past, or at least did not see in such a concentrated way: the fact, the reality of the message is He Himself, and not a series of truths. The Athanasian Creed is certainly correct when it says: *Quicumque vult salvus esse, ante omnia opus est, ut teneat catholicam fidem, quam nisi quisque integram inviolatamque servaverit, absque dubio in aeternam peribit. Fides autem catholica haec est, ut...* and then describes the contents of this faith in a series of thirty-seven doctrinal statements, and ends with the words: *Haec est fides catholica, quam nisi quisque fideliter firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit.* But it can produce the misunderstanding that our faith is founded on a series of doctrinal articles. All these articles, however, only bear witness to Him, to His life and work for us; they bear witness to this Jesus as our Lord.

What does *Christos Kyrios*, Christ the Lord, mean? This is unmistakably clear in the New Testament. Jesus is not an exceptionally good and pious person whom we should venerate and whose teachings we should accept. He is no idol who can be worshipped at an altar, like so many idols in the past and present, who are worshipped at an altar by priests, and to whom sacrifices must be offered on this altar. Jesus is not a man who died once, as all men do, but whose spirit is still alive, in the way



that the spirit of Socrates or Plato may still be alive. And Jesus is not one of the great founders of religions, like Buddha or Mohammed, whose impact is still very impressively effective among their followers. Those who try to understand Jesus in any one of these ways are in any case far from the opinion of the Apostles, who say : "The coming Judge is the judged Saviour. The coming Judge of the world is called Jesus of Nazareth. This Jesus, who has been executed on the Cross like a criminal, is the Lord of the world who sends His messengers. And these messengers announce : 'Call upon the Judge as upon your Saviour, and you will be saved from God's wrath.'" The message of the Last Judgment is, therefore, not a discouraging message. The beautiful hymn by Thomas of Celano, *Dies irae, dies illa*, with its second verse : *Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando Iudex est venturus cuncta strikte discussurus*, is not a Christian hymn. The message of the coming Judge is a joyful message, because the coming Judge is Jesus. When the Judgment approaches, we shall lift up our heads.

So the fact, the reality of the message is a Name. But this Name includes the Person Himself ; He can take various forms : for example, in the book of Acts, the coming Judge is the One who hangs on the accursed tree. In the letter to the Romans and in the first letter to the Corinthians, Jesus is called our righteousness : He Himself judges the world and sets it right. In Him God puts the universe in order and leads it back to Himself. He Himself adorns us with the garment of righteousness. In Ephesians it says : He is our peace. Peace between God and men, and peace between men. He is our peace ; that is more than He *gives* peace. In His Person peace is present. According to the first letter of St. John, God manifests in Him His love towards us. He is God's incarnate concern for us. In the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is described as the eternal High Priest, who has sacrificed Himself once and for all, who has gone to God, and who now prays for us eternally. And Revelation shows Him as the Lamb who was slain, and who reigns victoriously over the world. St. Matthew praises Him as the Lord of Israel who is the King of the world ; St. Mark as the Conqueror of the demons and the powers of darkness ; the Gospel of St. John as the *logos* who is with the Father, and was

made flesh, so that we could behold Him. And St. Luke, the doctor, describes Him as the Saviour of the poor and rejected.

*Lord of our "little" situations*

This proclamation, "Jesus is the Lord", each time strikes into a very special human situation. The proclamation of the one great change of condition does not mean that God is not interested in our individual situations in which the message may find us. Each move of the living Word is guided, determined, limited and protected by the Lord Himself. Generally we think quite differently: we realize that Jesus is the subject of the Gospel; we realize much less frequently that He Himself sends the messengers. And we are very often ignorant of the fact that the announcing is part of God's miracle in the name of Jesus. But it is true: we talk in His presence; He is there when His messengers mention His Name. How rarely do we realize that each time this voice is heard in the "little", everyday situations in which we find ourselves, it has been prepared, foreseen, designed and given by Him. We only really come to understand this in times of suffering. Three years ago I talked with Pastor de Graaf from Holland, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese in Java during the war. I asked him what it had been like, and he answered: "Of course it was terrible. But everything was so much more direct: faith and the Word of God, the Gospel and the Holy Communion, baptism and the joy in the Holy Spirit." Yes, the "little" situation in the prisoners' camp had been foreseen, limited, protected and guided by Jesus. He Himself indicates the time for silence and the time for speech. The Apostles did not start out right after His resurrection and ascension, and decide: "You go to Greece, and you to Asia Minor, you to Italy, and you to Spain." But if you look in the book of Acts you will see that, strangely enough, first of all they stayed together in Jerusalem. It was as if Jesus had never said: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Why was this? Because they did not think: "Jesus gave us an order and now rests, while we have to work", but because they knew, and lived in their knowledge that: "He is with us, and will show us the next step Himself." And so it happened that Peter was led

against his will into the house of Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11). The same thing happened with Paul (Acts 16 : 6 ff). When travelling in Asia Minor, the Holy Spirit forbade him to preach ; and again the Holy Spirit did not let him travel to Bithynia, but the Lord sent him to Macedonia (v. 9 ff).

We pastors, however, preach often and everywhere eternal truths, very correct things, and so turn the Bible again into a "Red Ox". We thus become again Jews who do not want to recognize God's new covenant. To evangelize means to receive here and now, today, the promise, Himself, Jesus Christ ; and with this comfort which we have received, to become messengers to all around us. If we understand that, we will no longer torment ourselves by asking : "What has the Bible to say to us today ?", which always presupposes that we know first what the Bible says. The Bible always speaks to our situation today. The living voice only speaks now because Jesus is risen from the dead. Because He lives His word is always immediately relevant ! We must remember here with gratitude the theologians Julius Schniewind and Karl Barth, who opened the understanding of my generation to this living word of the Lord through the Scriptures.

### *In His presence*

And finally it has become clear that evangelism is only possible in prayer and adoration, because in pronouncing the name of Jesus, I speak in His presence. Let me give an example. It happened some years ago, in a prison, that the examining magistrate asked a prisoner mockingly : "And, by the way, your Jesus, isn't he supposed to have become alive again ?" The answer was : "He has not only risen, He is in this room, sir. Every time we talk together, He is the third in our conversation. We are never alone. And I am only astonished that you did not notice that long ago." The magistrate never jeered again. When we evangelize, we ask Him to stay with us and not to be silent, but to speak to the hearts of men. And in talking about the Lord, we praise and glorify Him. Preaching does not mean instructing each other. Only those who are beggars before God can evangelize, praising the great God who has done and still does so much for us, in our situation today and always.



## Bible Study with Non-Christians

HANS-RUEDI WEBER

I hope no one will be upset if, instead of delivering a high-brow intellectual lecture, I tell you a story. It is a story and not history ; the persons we will meet do not exist, but the events I am going to tell you about actually happened.

It is the story of my young friend, Ketut, and his father, Pak' Made. The story will take us to Surabaya, the big harbour and commercial city of Eastern Java, and to the famous island of Bali.

When I first met Ketut he was a student in one of the many high schools of Surabaya. He came to the first vacation camp organized by the Surabajan SCM for all those boys and girls who had left their villages and their old traditional customs for the hustle and bustle of a city of more than one million. Ketut was just one of the many non-Christians who joined our camp, but we very soon became firm friends. When I told him that I had been invited to Bali, he quite spontaneously asked me to come to his village and visit his father. "He also", he said, "knows something about this Christ of whom you speak and would like to know more about Him."

So it happened that some weeks later Ketut and I went to the village where Pak' Made lives. It is one of those genuine Hindu-Balinese settlements, far from the main road and the tourist traffic. In the courtyard of the house there were numerous altars : towards the holy mountain the altars for the adoration of the good gods, and in the direction of the sea the place to which the wife of Pak' Made brought sacrifices every sunset to chase away the demons. Pak' Made himself was a member of the village orchestra. While he played in the village temple, he was proud to see his daughter dance. During that time she was no longer his daughter, but became a goddess as she fell into a trance.

For some time past Pak' Made's mind had been filled with confusing thoughts. Even the first evening he told me, "It is now about ten full moons since a Chinese merchant came to our village and told me the story about Jesus. He taught me this song." He sang it to me, and it was a very simple song about the blood of Jesus which was shed for us. Made said, "After the Chinese had gone I sang the song over and over again, and that night I saw Jesus."

And so happened for Made the real event which must happen for each one of us if we are to become Christians : Christ must become a living Person who meets us, and speaks to us, and calls us. For Made, as for so many Asian people, it happened in a dream ; for us it may happen in other ways, but it is always a great mystery.

### *The whole history of salvation*

During the following days Made and I spoke much about Jesus ; he already knew quite a few Bible stories and I told him more. But however many stories I told and however much Christian doctrine I taught him, I could not free myself from the impression that it all fell into a heathen sea ; it was taken over and translated into the whole heathen way of thinking. During these days I searched for a way to break through this pattern of thought. The solution did not come from my own mind, nor from the teaching of my theological professors : the answer came during the night of the next full moon.

Full moon in Bali : feasting, *gamelan* music and dancing. In Made's village there was a big festival in the temple. It began with the soft music of the *gamelan* and small girls dancing the *legon*. The music became wilder and more passionate and suddenly we saw Rangda, a frightening mask which personifies all evil demons. But there appeared also Barong, the personification of the good forces, and now began again the age-long, never-ending struggle between good and evil, Rangda and Barong.

It was only during this night that I realized to what extent the whole life, thinking and feeling of Pak' Made was bound up

in this myth of Rangda and Barong — the struggle between the good gods of the holy mountain and the bad demons of the sea. This myth was the basis of Made's pattern of life and of all his presuppositions. Everything that could happen must have a place in this pattern and was quite unconsciously fitted into it. So no matter how many Bible stories and how much Christian doctrine Made knew, he always put them in his own heathen mythical context, and the historical Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate was changed again and again into a mythical hero.

So this first important element in Bible study with non-Christians became clear to me. The only way to free non-Christians from the enchantment of mythical thinking is to pierce through and demolish the whole circle of myth, and to replace it with the whole new Christian pattern of thinking — the history of salvation.

Pak' Made must begin to realize that he does not live within the context of Rangda and Barong, but within the context of the development of the history of salvation, within the greatest drama ever played. Therefore, it is not so important that he know many scenes and details of this drama. It is not so important that he know many Bible stories and verses and many chapters of Christian doctrine. What is essential is that he know the structure of the whole drama and of the whole doctrine: he must know the beginning and the end and the climax of the drama of salvation, the creation and the fall, the *parousia*, the Kingdom, and Christ as the all-governing and decisive centre and turning-point. He must know the history of the covenant between God and Israel, and the history of the mission of God's Church in this world. He must discover his own role in this drama.

Do not say that it is impossible for Pak' Made to grasp this vision of the whole history of salvation. He will grasp it far better than most Western intellectuals, because his whole thinking has a global, classifying and integrating character. He will understand the part only if he has an understanding of the whole. It will only be possible for him to see the message of a single verse if he can see it within the context of the whole Bible.



From then on I began to explain to Pak' Made this wholeness of the biblical message, and we went through the Bible from the very beginning until the very end. That does not take long : you can show God's plan as revealed to us in the Bible in one hour. From then on I began every Bible course with a short trip through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, to communicate the whole of the biblical message before communicating the parts.

### *Images and symbols*

I learned still another thing during this night of the full moon in the village temple on Bali. During these hours very few words were spoken, and yet a whole theology was communicated to us by means which reach the heart less by way of the ear and the intellect than through the eye and the imagination. We learned the message of the Hindu-Balinese mythology and cosmology through participating in the drama of this message. One might say that the dance of Rangda and Barong is nothing less than a dance-dogma of Hindu-Balinese belief.

So I learned that night that I could not reach Pak' Made and his people with the biblical message through the usual Western, verbal, intellectual ways of communication. I had to learn their ways, and to speak to their imagination as well as to their intellect. I had to use images and symbolic actions as well as abstract terms. I began to understand why Pak' Made did not feel at home in the Christian worship. After his dream, Pak' Made had gone once to the Protestant Church and then to a Roman Catholic Church, but he told me, "When I went to this first church, there was a man who spoke to us, and he spoke and spoke, and we just sat there, and I couldn't understand what he said. And then I went to this other church, and there were people who did some strange things, and I sat there and looked at it and I couldn't understand what they did." I know now that what Pak' Made and his people need is not to listen to a monologue (as so many of our Protestant services are) nor to watch a theatre (which Roman Catholic worship tends to be). Worship for Pak' Made must be a real drama in which he can participate, a rich, understandable liturgy with a short, concrete sermon and the celebration of the Sacraments.

During the following days, as Pak' Made and I sat together, I began to draw more and more. We found very simple signs and symbols to express the main biblical concepts. And as I explained the great design in the history of salvation, I simultaneously visualized this development of God's design through drawing the different concept-signs and arranging them according to the teaching.

The old Christian symbols and the symbolic actions of the celebration of the Sacraments also proved to be a marvellous way of interpreting the Christian faith. We first looked at some Hindu-Balinese symbols sculptured on the wall of the nearby temple, and Pak' Made explained their inner meaning to me. I then drew an old Christian symbol and set its message over against that of the Hindu-Balinese symbols. Such conversations on the deepest meaning of our faith proved to be a most inspiring way of learning for both Pak' Made and me.

### *Life-story*

When Ketut and I went back to Surabaya we talked about the next vacation camp. The theme of our first camp had been the relation between boys and girls, but I realized now how much the program had been shaped by the Western approach : we had begun with a lecture on the subject, and then had discussion groups. On the journey back to Surabaya I promised myself to do better during our second camp, having learned my lesson in the village of Pak' Made.

Here then is the program of that second camp. We began by telling the boys and girls a story of a young Asian who left his village to go to a big city and to enter a high school. When he was a child he had lived quite naturally in his family group ; his own individuality, his "I" was, so to speak, enveloped in the "we" of the group. You can imagine how frustrating it is for such a young boy when he suddenly comes into the hustle and bustle of an Asian port. His whole pattern of life is shaken, and he gets into a completely chaotic frame of mind.

We continued our story up to the moment when our hero did not know the way out of his confusion. We then stopped and said to the boys and girls : "Now it is up to you to find the right way for our hero. We are giving you a compass to find

the way." We then distributed a mimeographed copy of the parable of the prodigal son, and divided the boys and girls into small groups which were given one hour to prepare a play on this parable. Most of them were, like Ketut, non-Christians, and they were reading a Bible passage for the first time. They had never before done any Bible study, but I have never seen Christian boys and girls study the Bible with such fervour and intensity.

After this hour of work we came together, and some of the groups presented their dramatization of the parable. We did not need a long discussion to find the relevance of this parable to our daily life. The boys and girls had entered completely into the story of the parable; they had identified themselves with the characters of the story, and they had found the way out for the hero. They had found their own way, because the story of our hero was the story of their own life.

During the camp this life-story was continued, and led to ever-new crises to which we let the young people themselves find the solutions through dramatic Bible study.

### *Rhythm*

There is a third element which is of great importance in Bible study with non-Christians and which I could have seen during that night of the full moon in the village temple in Bali. But I realized it only some days later when Ketut and I went for a long trip along the beach. We saw the rising and the setting of the sun, the ebb and flow of the tides; we saw children and old people, happy and sad; we saw a new-born baby and a dying man. And when we lay down in the evening, and as Ketut asked me many questions about life in the West, I searched again for an answer to a question which had puzzled me for so long: what is the enchantment of life under tropical skies? And suddenly I realized that it was this rhythm of nature, the rhythm of birth and death, of day and night, of planting and reaping, this rhythm which embraces the whole microcosm and macrocosm, this rhythm in which you yourself are so taken up that you become a part of it.

We cannot ignore this rhythm in our Bible studies with people of this strange world of naturalistic religions, because



they are impregnated and marked by it. For them it is almost a language. You see it in their music, which is more rhythmic than melodious ; you hear it in their speech, for they like so well to speak in verse, in rhythmic language. And you see it above all in the dance. What had struck Made most of all were the songs which had been taught him by the Chinese evangelist. Therefore, we must find ways to use this rhythmic element, this singing and dancing, in our Bible studies with non-Christians.

But there is still another more important thing to be done : the rhythm which has a hold upon these people is a naturalistic one, and we have to sanctify this heathen rhythm through the great rhythm of the history of salvation. Have you ever noticed that rhythm of withdrawal and return which is revealed to us in the Bible ? God was with man in paradise, but then occurred the estrangement. And God visited man again in Emmanuel. But in a sense the ascension means a new withdrawal, and we became a pilgrim people and foreigners in this world. However, we look forward to Christ's *parousia* and the Kingdom, where God Himself will be with us. Have you recognized this same rhythm in the life of Christ, who again and again withdrew Himself from the world to pray, to return more fully into the world. The same rhythm must characterize our Christian life, and Bible study with non-Christians means primarily training in this rhythm. Therefore, when Ketut and some of his non-Christian friends had become students, and when more and more of them came asking me for spiritual guidance, I began to hold retreats.

It is also of tremendous importance that the church in Bali should maintain the rhythm of Christian worship, develop ways of worship for daily prayer, for the Sunday communion, for the whole cycle of the church year, and provide possibilities for yearly retreats. Otherwise Pak' Made and his friends will fall back into the heathen rhythm of life.

### *Bible study for them*

You may say that I have not dealt properly with my subject — "Bible Study with Non-Christians". You are right, if you think of Bible study only in terms of reading Bible passages

and commentaries, and discussing them intellectually. But for people coming out of the world of naturalism communication means primarily participation. To see the whole of the drama of the history of salvation, and to discover that they themselves play a role in it, is Bible study for them. Meditating on the meaning of the Cross, where this whole history of salvation is concentrated in a single sign, is Bible study for them. Participation in the Holy Communion and seeing the meaningful symbol of the breaking of the bread is Bible study for them. And being trained to enter the biblical rhythm of life through participation in a retreat is Bible study for them.

## The Bible in an Ecumenical Setting

*A panel of two addresses, followed by comments of a third speaker  
and discussion, given at the Bible Study Conference  
held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland,  
September 2-12, 1955*

Father JOHN DE LA CROIX KAELEN, O.P.

It is always a difficult and delicate task for a Roman Catholic to embark upon the problems raised by ecumenism. On the one hand, he is aware that if he fails in loyalty to his church, he fails in loyalty to Christ Himself and consequently to the Word of God. On the other hand, he is aware that the affirmations of his church cannot fail to appear pretentious, as well as incomprehensible, in the eyes of his non-Catholic brethren, and that at the same time there is a risk that his own life will give the lie to what he must affirm about his church.

Torn between love for what he knows to be the truth, and love for fellow Christians who in his view do not know this truth, or else misunderstand it, he is always afraid of being either insensitive, if not unfriendly, or else unfaithful to God, if he yields to the temptation of a "supra-dogmatic" friendship. Since dogma is in his eyes the guaranteed expression of revealed truth, he can no more exclude any part of it than he can exclude the most immediate affirmations of the Gospel.

As Jacques Maritain used to say, this friendship — which I have felt so deeply here and which makes my task less difficult — may not be supra-dogmatic, but it is "supra-subjective": it does not lead us out of our faith to join others, but it does lead us out of ourselves, helping us to extract our actual faith from the rind of egoism and subjectivity in which we instinctively tend to enclose it.

If I were to try to express the intention of this panel in the minds of the organizers, I should say that it was to see how



the Bible, just because it is the meeting-place of the Christian with Jesus Christ, to use a favourite formula of yours (which we accept with a difference), may be the place where Christians of different confessions may discover and gradually realize the unity willed by Christ, and perhaps also, you would say, by the loyal confronting of those very differences arrive at a better knowledge of Jesus Christ. For there is certainly for you, as well as for me, a close relation between the knowledge of Christ and unity in Christ. If we all perfectly understood the mystery of Jesus, His thought, His purpose, there would be no barrier between us, for we all equally desire above all to be faithful to His Person and to His thought expressed in His Word.

### *Difficulties in "ecumenical" Bible study*

If I have correctly expressed the thought of the organizers, there are difficulties and gains for us all in this ecumenical encounter on the Bible. I know that the ecumenical movement believes that no work towards reunion, towards closer approach to one another, or mutual understanding can be accomplished by trying to blind oneself to the difficulties. I shall begin then by stating the difficulties which seem to me to be inherent in such an enterprise.

The major difficulty seems to me to arise from the fact that the Bible has neither the same meaning nor the same place in the Christian life for you as for me. It is not exactly the same reality for some as for others. Without doubt, it is for all of us the Word of God (although the Barthians would not grant me that). At least, however we look at it, we should all agree in saying that God speaks in the Bible.

Even so, I think that this statement covers some very different meanings. When the Roman Catholic affirms that God speaks in the Bible, it means that the Bible is the Word of God that the inspired authors have fixed in writing. We know that the Apostles not only wrote but preached. St. Paul recommends the Thessalonians to hold the traditions which they were taught whether by word of mouth or by letter (II Thess. 2 : 15). He reminds the Corinthians, in writing, of the Gospel which he preached to them when he was with them (I Cor. 15 : 1).

In the written word, which is what interests us here, we must distinguish the revealed formulas used by the sacred writers who spoke to us of divine matters in human language, and the revealed meaning of these formulas. (I shall not enter into detailed discussion here of the doctrine of inspiration.) We believe that the Apostles knew the import of revelation in its plenitude, although their understanding was not completely expressed. What the Apostles gave to the primitive Church is the formulas and the essential content without which the formulas become useless, just as the flesh without the spirit is useless.

The Church (and we mean here not the phenomenon but the inner mystery), the Church which is through the Spirit the Body of Christ, which lives in faith in the Son of God (Gal. 3 : 20-21), her Husband, the Well-Beloved, receives this treasure of Scripture as a wonderful additional gift. (I do not mean by this that Scripture is an extra because of this fact — in the present economy it is necessary and the Church could not do without it.) The Church keeps this treasure of Scripture, rereads it unceasingly and studies it with love. But she has the Bridegroom and He is more than Scripture. She lives the life of Christ and, therefore, lives the Word of God ; that is why it is impossible for her to read the Scripture apart from her own life : Christ is her life.

The Church does not stand under the judgment of the Bible, although the light of the Gospel distinguishes in each of her members what is of Christ or the Church (that is one and the same thing) and what is still of this world. That does not mean, however, that she stands in judgment on the Bible and is greater than it is. On the contrary, she reads the Bible with the discernment given her by the Holy Spirit, its Author, and that is why she judges men's interpretations of the Bible.

It is because of the presence in her of the Holy Spirit given to the Apostles at Pentecost that she continues to bring the Divine Word to the world, forever cataloguing the treasures of the Bible in order to make explicit its inexhaustible meaning, and to offer it to the faithful, knowing that in this presentation she is mysteriously helped by the Holy Spirit. In this way what she affirms as being revealed by God is never again called

in question, and she moves into the future enriched with all the treasure of past centuries, without any break of continuity with the primitive Church, with this one difference. The Apostles, being the founders of the Church, enjoyed the prophetic light of the revelation, whereas the Church receives no new revelations, but is helped by the Spirit to develop the revelation which ended with the Apostles.

What I have just said enables me, I think, to grasp the difficulty inherent in what you would call an ecumenical approach to the Bible. The Roman Catholic does not come to the Bible to submit the doctrine which he professes to the judgment of the Word of God. In so far as he is Catholic, he knows that what he has to believe of divine faith (I leave aside other assents which may be asked of him) is biblical truth, revealed by God. What he submits to the judgment of God is his personal life, which so often betrays the Gospel. But that aspect does not arise directly from an ecumenical approach. He cannot come to the Bible saying: "I have a certain knowledge of Jesus Christ made up of truth and error; I am going to listen to what the Holy Spirit has said to my non-Catholic brethren, and then, all together submitting our various ways of seeing Christ to the judgment of the Word of God, we hope to arrive at a better and truer knowledge of Christ."

### *Gains in "ecumenical" Bible study*

Does this mean that the Catholic can learn nothing from others and that an "ecumenical" reading of the Bible is unproductive? I do not think so.

1. The Catholic coming to the Bible can, in the first place, benefit from the contribution of men, some of whom have devoted years to loving study of the sacred texts. Nevertheless, since he cannot read the Bible independently of the Church, he instinctively makes distinctions. In all that he hears, he will only apprehend what he recognizes as a Catholic truth, that is to say, a truth in harmony with the total vision which the Church gives him. He knows that this discernment is not arbitrary, that he does not twist the sacred text to one side



to make it fit a system, but that it is indispensable to place every truth in the light of the whole.

2. In such an encounter the Catholic may become more keenly aware that certain attitudes of Catholics veil or deform the real thought of the Church, thus contributing to the prolonging of painful misunderstandings. He will be obliged constantly to correct and purify the way he thinks and lives the life of the Church. The seriousness with which his non-Catholic brethren approach, love and study the Bible will lead him to ask himself if he is not often responsible for the obstacles which prevent them from finding in the Bible what he himself has found there thanks to the Church. This meeting then will have one not insignificant advantage : that of compelling him to lead a life more in conformity with the Gospel, to be more "the Church".

3. Another benefit arising from an ecumenical encounter is a better understanding of one's neighbours, a better recognition of what other confessions contain of truth and of dignity, a deeper respect for the work of God in upright hearts, whatever be the differences which cause opposition or division between their confession and Catholicism. It is, as it were, a purification of brotherly charity, an important factor of union.

4. One can go further. We believe that it can happen in non-Catholic confessions that certain aspects of the Catholic treasure may be discovered or used better than they are in the Church itself. Without doubt these discoveries will be such that the Church could never have denied them ; on the contrary, they will appear as being homogeneous with its doctrine and as finding the fulness of their riches in it. Thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, who also acts outside the visible frontiers of the Church, these "discoveries" may be joyfully recognized as Catholic. If our brothers lack something, it is inclusion in the total life of the mystical Body.

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## W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT

My starting-point is the fact that in the history of the Church and in the relations between churches of different kinds, the Bible has, on the whole, been a divisive factor. I do not need to go into that : it is very obvious that most of the great theological battles between the confessions have been battles about the Bible. If you see the full significance of that fact, you become deeply amazed and grateful that in our time we begin to see evidence of the opposite. There is a sense in which the Bible is a unitive factor, an agent of unity. I think we cannot underline that fact sufficiently, because in the whole sweep of the history of the Bible and the Church, this is a very important phenomenon. It may be that some time we shall come to the conclusion that more important than the rise of the "ecumenical movement", more important than the rise of organizations concerned with ecumenical affairs, is the deeper and more basic happening that the Bible is reasserting itself in all confessions, and that the new place of the Bible and the return to it provide a new opportunity, not only for conversation and discussion, but to a large extent also for understanding.

*Learning from one another*

Of course it has always been true that the *charisma*, the spiritual gift, of explaining the Bible to the Church, not merely in an intellectual, but in a truly spiritual sense, has never been confined to one particular confession. If you really love the Bible, if you really want to know what the Bible is all about, you almost have to open yourself to voices coming from different confessions, from different parts of the Church. Although his work is not very easily accessible for those who do not know the basic languages, all of us can learn a tremendous amount from that astonishing Bible commentator, Origen. He belongs, of course, in a very real sense to the East. Similarly we would

do well to look also into the commentaries of St. Augustine, very especially those on the Psalms. Again, whether we be Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant, we should overcome possible prejudices and look at the commentaries of the Reformers, both Luther and Calvin. For whatever else you may say about them, here are men who have lived so deeply with their Bible that they have opened up biblical truth. It is one of the encouraging facts of our time that this is recognized by people who do not belong to either the Lutheran or the Reformed confession.

There is, of course, another field in which we find it easier to recognize one another's contributions, that of religious art. I find that here most of us have very few inhibitions. As one who has a special love for Rembrandt, for instance, I am always interested to find to what extent my Roman Catholic friends use him in all sorts of ways, even to illustrate Roman Catholic books. Now I am convinced, and it has been recognized by some of the best historians of art in the Roman Catholic Church, like Father Régamey, that Rembrandt's inspiration is very typically Protestant. The same is true of Protestants who, and I think rightly, are ready to receive insights about biblical truth from Roman Catholic artists. Thus we can all learn from medieval art. Turning to the East, I would say that some of the most deeply Christian and biblical painting I have seen is that of some of the great Byzantine artists.

I think, however, that we can say in general that we are more ready to learn from one another at present than has been true in past centuries. An example is the way in which Suzanne de Diétrich's books have permeated wide circles in churches other than her own, especially their use in Roman Catholic circles in countries like France and Belgium. We should add the influence which the great biblical "Kittel" dictionary exerts among Bible students of all confessions. Another example is that when I was in Greece one of the leaders of the Zoe Movement, the Greek Orthodox Movement for revival of church life, and especially of interest in the Bible, told me about his interest in van Oosterzee, a Dutch theologian of the nineteenth century, explaining that he used his books as a basis for the commentaries that he put out in Greece. Here was a nineteenth century



Protestant theological writer, forgotten in his own country, who is suddenly speaking to a church in another part of the world.

Similarly, Protestant theologians have learned to look in a new way to Roman Catholic New Testament scholarship. Protestant New Testament scholars know that they can learn a great deal from Roman Catholic New Testament science. As one who has recently been in Jerusalem, I must express my admiration for the solid work that has been done at the *Ecole Biblique*.

If we really want to do serious work on our Bible, we should read commentaries by men of all different confessions. There are relatively few first-class commentaries of which we can say: "This writer has really delved into the Word. He is a real miner who goes into the depths of the thing and delivers the goods." So let us use those of all who have received the spiritual gift of true exegesis.

### *The Bible belongs to all confessions*

This leads to a further conclusion. We have begun to see that the Bible belongs far more to all the confessions than any one confession realizes. In the old days it was thought in most confessions, and to a certain extent this is true even today: the Bible is "our" book. The Bible belongs to "us", and if others talk about the Bible and try to quote it, they are really doing so without any right, and are not really serious about it, for "we" are the people of the Bible. That is what I meant when I said that the Bible was divisive. But today it is more generally realized, even if not all are willing to admit it openly, that the Bible belongs to other confessions too.

In our discussions today we can make this more concrete because the two speakers happen to be Catholic and Protestant. What I mean is that the Bible is more Catholic than most Protestants have realized, and is more Protestant than most Catholics have realized. This is precisely what makes the present situation so interesting. Take, for example, the whole new approach of *Formgeschichte*, the study of the specific oral traditions out of which the New Testament has grown. Curiously enough, this new approach has been developed by Protestants.

Catholics have been quick to conclude that, if it is true that the Bible has grown out of certain traditions, Protestants should accept the full Roman Catholic concept of tradition. Or take another example which is of importance for the ecumenical movement. It has been rather easily assumed in periods gone by that the Bible did not speak about visible organic church unity, but only about a spiritual unity which need not necessarily take on a tangible form in the world. But today there are very few New Testament scholars who do not admit that this is really an untenable position, and that the Bible does indeed talk about a unity which is incarnate, which must become tangible, and find full expression within this world. Even the Evangelical Alliance, which had always advocated the idea of the invisible character of the unity of the Church, has just come out with a little book by a New Testament scholar in which they admit, for the first time after more than a century, that when the Bible speaks about unity it means visible unity.

Now let us turn to the other side of the medal and state why the Bible is more Protestant than most Catholics have been willing to realize. It is now much more widely recognized in Roman Catholic theology than in the past that there was deep truth in Luther's emphasis on the *theologia crucis* as central in the Bible, as over against what he called *theologia gloriae*. *Theologia crucis* means a theology in which the Cross is and remains central. The Cross is the criterion of the existence of the Church in this world, and it is therefore an unacceptable anticipation to speak of the life of the Church in this world as if it had moved beyond the Cross. I do not say that Roman Catholic theologians are willing to accept the full implications of Luther's insight, but I do find in books by Roman Catholics about Luther, and also in the New Testament work of Roman Catholics, a far greater willingness to recognize a deep element of truth in that emphasis of Luther than was true in former generations. The same is true in the field of eschatology. There has been more emphasis in Protestant New Testament work than in that of Roman Catholics on the eschatological dimension in the New Testament, on that element which refers to the ultimate things, to the last things. But I think that here again there is now a much greater acceptance of this on the part of

Roman Catholics than was formerly true. I may refer to the book of Father Braun, *Aspects nouveaux du problème de l'Eglise*, which goes far in accepting the conclusions of Protestant New Testament scholars on this particular point.

This new situation must not lead us to the purely relativistic conclusion that, since there are all these various aspects of the biblical message, it is everyone's book, and everyone can draw his own conclusions. That would be very unecumenical. It means rather that we have to take our ecumenical encounter on this particular meeting-ground of the Bible very seriously. In this matter I agree with what Father Kaelin has already said. There is, in the ecumenical encounter, the possibility of mutual correction. If we stand in great open-mindedness before one another, we may succeed in curing one another's blind spots. It has been inevitable that, in the controversies of past centuries and especially of the period after the Reformation, there came in elements of one-sidedness. In order to win our point over against others we simply did not want to listen to certain voices that were really based on biblical truth. It is important that we are now more ready to listen to these voices. At the same time we can help one another to guard against the danger of picking and choosing in the Bible. We all do that. A classical example is in the matter of the images of the Church. Certain images are taken very seriously by one confession; others are taken seriously by another. We should, of course, take every one of the biblical images seriously, and try to see them in the total biblical context.

### *Difficulty in the ecumenical encounter*

So far I have spoken of a number of positive elements in the situation, but I must now mention the basic difficulty in our encounter. On the one hand, we have the attitude which holds with profound conviction that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the norm of truth. But the fact remains that it is the great principle of the Counter-Reformation that the Bible by itself can never be that criterion. Father Kaelin has spoken quite frankly about certain Protestant attitudes that seem to him utterly unacceptable. Similarly, I must now say that as a Protestant I have heard at least a few things this afternoon

which, for me, are utterly unacceptable. The most important of these is what Father Kaelin said about the Bible being given to the Church, as it were *par surcroît*, that is, as an "extra". He does not, as I understand him, say that the Bible is unimportant, but he says that the Church could have lived without the record of the Word of God. For Protestants that is utterly unthinkable.

At this point I have to ask a question of Father Kaelin. Is this attitude to the Bible in the tradition of the really "traditional"? I would say that tradition includes the great Church Fathers, and I cannot remember one of them who has written that the Bible is not "necessary". In fact, some of them use that very word: *necessarium*. In devotional Catholic literature, Thomas à Kempis speaks of the Word and the Sacrament as the two *necessaria*. So I do not understand how it is possible to say that the Church could have lived without the Bible, or that it is given *par surcroît*, because that, to my mind, throws the Church back into utter loneliness.

### *Voices across the chasm*

I say this so there may be full frankness in the conversation, as Father Kaelin has also been quite frank. But I now go on to say that we must thank God for the fact that there is nevertheless this tremendous interest on all parts in the Bible. In this realm there is so much happening in the Roman Catholic Church that it often puts non-Roman Catholics to shame. There is a certain freshness in new discoveries in the Roman Catholic Church in the field of the Bible. I am thinking of the new translations which have been made of the Bible, and of the Bible movements, which are, of course, far newer in the Roman Catholic Church than with us, and therefore often have a greater vitality. When we see all that happening, we can only rejoice. We believe that all those who study the Scriptures seriously will hear the Word of God, and if that is so, it must be possible for us to listen to this Word *together*. The Roman Catholic will bring Tradition with a capital T, and we shall bring tradition with a small t. We shall not always succeed. I remember something that happened here at Bossey at a conference of theologians on



the right way of explaining the Bible. One of the speakers was a great confessionalist. He had all the time before him the book of the confessions of his church, and he kept opening them and saying, "Our confession number so and so says. . ." Karl Barth was sitting next to him and became a little nervous. At a certain moment when the man had just opened the book again, Barth took it, closed it, and put the Greek New Testament on top of it. He didn't say anything, but the gesture was sufficiently eloquent. Thus the problem of traditionalism also plays a role among Protestants. But it plays a slightly different role.

The ecumenical movement in the widest sense is based on the principle that truth operates, that it is not dead, but dynamic, and that therefore when, in an ecumenical setting, we have Bible study together, what we are really doing is exposing ourselves to this operating truth. Now we define differently what this truth is. We therefore experience moments of irritation and frustration. I agree with Father Kaelin that we must avoid confusion. I agree with him that there is no ecumenical approach to the Bible in the sense that we can suddenly forget the positions of our own churches, but I believe that at the same time we can expose ourselves together to this operating truth. Then, in spite of the frustrations and misunderstandings, there will again and again come moments when there will be voices coming across the chasm, the voice of the common Lord. We believe that Jesus Christ Himself speaks His Word when men are willing to listen to Him. We believe that in the Roman Catholic Church there are such people, and our Roman Catholic brethren believe that in other churches there are such people.

And I think we can go one step further. More light is yet to break forth from the Word of God precisely when we are exposing ourselves to it in a new and fuller way. To do Bible study in an ecumenical setting is to take that simple fact seriously. Therefore even though at times it will be terribly difficult to start it, and it will be even more difficult to continue with it, and in many cases we may come up against a blank wall, we must all insist that Bible study in an ecumenical setting is indispensable for the health and the progress of a true ecumenical movement.

## HELLE GEORGIADIS

There are two points which the other speakers have made on which I should like to comment. I was very interested in the example Dr. Visser 't Hooft gave of religious art as something in which we can share without prejudice. It takes no ecumenical experience or ecumenical activity to receive some enlightenment or interpretation of the Scriptures through the artists who come from different Christian traditions, whereas, as he said, we are often extremely reluctant to read the books and to try to enter into the thought of the theologians and writers of traditions and confessions other than our own. I should like to ask the question here : are we sure that we are using the word "ecumenical" in the same sense ? It seems to me that when we approach art, we are engaging in a real ecumenical activity, but I very much doubt whether one can use the same sense of the word "ecumenical" to refer to our gatherings together now, and for this reason : the examples Dr. Visser 't Hooft gave of art came from the Middle Ages ; he did not mention any contemporary artists. Now he might have done so, but actually he was thinking in terms of an artistic tradition which goes back to the early centuries. But when we think now of ecumenical conversations, we think primarily in terms of our contemporaries.

*Importance of the Fathers*

This is a point which came up when we were trying to consider what special aspects of ecumenical Bible study we, who are not of the Protestant traditions, find difficult to accept. And we, at least the Orthodox, came to this conclusion : where we principally differed was in that, for us, the witness of the Holy Spirit is not something which is given just to us at this moment, but it has been given throughout the centuries to others in our Church ; in particular we recognize it as given to the Fathers of the Church and the Ecumenical Councils. Thus when we turn to the Scrip-

tures for guidance and illumination in interpreting the text and understanding the Word of God, the Orthodox, and I think this is true for Catholics as well, do not approach it as a simple confrontation of ourselves now and the Bible as it was given once and for all, but we approach it in the context of the whole experience of the Church from the apostolic time to the present day. For this reason, in the report which is to be presented to this conference for discussion later, we have made the suggestion that the writings of the Fathers on the Bible should be given a definite place in ecumenical Bible study.

Now this, of course, is already done by scholars and students in their study of the Bible, and I would make a distinction here between Bible study by scholars and Bible study when we come together as persons seeking to know the Word of God for ourselves. I think there is a distinction, because the motive is to some extent distinguishable, and certainly the people come prepared in quite a different fashion. And so my first point is to try to draw out this fact of the contemporaneity of the whole tradition of exegesis when we come to a confrontation with the Bible for ourselves, and to plead therefore for a place to be given to the writings of the Fathers. They would have, of course, to be selected, because they are so extensive, but I think it would be well worth meeting in the company of some of those early Fathers, when we study the Bible in an ecumenical group. I think the concept of the Church implied in this is a very important one. It means that when we meet, as we have met here, the Orthodox come virtually as exiles. It is not that we do not rejoice in fellowship with Christians of other traditions, but that we have to come out of the context in which we are accustomed to live with the Fathers and the Saints through the ages. For us that line of fellowship which goes back in time is as important, if not more important, than the line which we have followed here which goes horizontally among our contemporaries.

### *Participation through affirmation*

The second point relates to something which Father Kaelin said on the question of Bible study by ecumenical groups. The technics that we have been using at this conference are quite

acceptable in themselves ; they do not seem to raise any problems in connection with the teaching of our Church. Nevertheless, the approach is different. When we Orthodox come to the Bible there is a large area of interpretation which for us is the basis of our faith, and when we join in an ecumenical group for Bible study, we do not really have the same kind of participation as our Protestant friends. In participating we make an affirmation, and you participate as a seeking of what God has to say. The difference comes from the fact that we have an authoritative interpretation of faith in the Church. Therefore Protestant questioning and Orthodox questioning have a fundamentally different character. But as Father Kaelin has pointed out, when we study the Bible together ecumenically, we have this in common : that we seek thereby to express the charity of God. When we confront together certain passages where our Lord speaks to us, we confront them with those who are of the family, who acknowledge the same Lord. Our ecclesiastical divisions are a challenge which we try to meet by seeking to establish a unity of faith, and in witnessing to our love and obedience to the one Lord who claims allegiance from us all, we are enabled to give expression to the life of charity which animates His Body, the Church.

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## DISCUSSION

Father Kaelin replied to a question from Dr. Visser 't Hooft that when he had said that the Bible had been given *comme par surcroît*, he knew that he would scandalize his listeners. He had expressed his personal thought in this way, straining the terms, in order to make clear the differences between the Catholic and the Protestant points of view as far as the Bible is concerned. In fact, the Bible is not given "in addition" ; it is one of the essential elements of Christianity and, therefore, is indispensable in the "economy of God". What he meant was that the Holy Ghost is so present in the Church, so given to her, that it would have been possible for God to conduct her without the Bible.



But as the Bible has been given, it is in fact a treasure for the Church.

Another speaker suggested, in defence of Father Kaelin's earlier statement, that Luther himself had said that the Bible was not exactly necessary. The canon of Scriptures had been given because of the danger of errors of tradition. The apostolic tradition of the New Testament was unique and all other interpretation was bound to that. He also spoke of the early tradition received from Mary through Luke as well as that of the Apostles.

Pastor Hamel said the canon of the Scriptures was established in the first century and the Church respected it. If this canon had been established in the third century it would have been changed. Thus contradictions were allowed to remain because the Church of the first century had remained open to the voice of Jesus and the Apostles, and preserved the original tradition faithfully even when it was uncomfortable. Dr. Visser 't Hooft asked Helle Georgiadis whether the Orthodox and Catholic Churches had made an official interpretation of every important passage. He claimed that in most of the Bible no official decisions had been made and that left considerable freedom. She replied that the church teaching was clear on certain doctrinal points which arose out of the text.

Leila Giles asked Father Kaelin whether, if more light broke forth from the Scriptures, it could only be for the personal life of a Catholic. She also asked, if something new came out, whether it could only be seen truly within the Roman Catholic Church. Father Kaelin said that the Holy Spirit worked with freedom and that, in Christ, the discoveries of old and new treasures were inexhaustible. These treasures could be discovered by non-Catholics, but only because of the ignorance or negligence of Catholics who did not perceive the truths already there within the Roman Catholic Church.

He also declared that he would defend the Church of the first century from the attack of Pastor Hamel. The Church of the first century read the Epistle to the Romans with an open mind. The theology developed later. Ronald Woodruff said that in the Protestant Church also it was impossible to change dogmas through individual opinions. The Protestants were sometimes

careless in their attitude to their Church and their knowledge of its beliefs, and some theologians were more separate from the life of the Church than they should be.

Norman Spoor asked what place was allowed in the Roman Catholic Church for discontinuous and disruptive influences of the Holy Spirit. Father Kaelin answered that it was necessary to distinguish dogma from other thought. The Roman Catholic Church believed that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was never contrary to what had been given before. For instance, the Church affirmed the two natures in one person of Jesus Christ, although this was not written in the Gospel. The Church had formulated this dogma in councils and it expressed a reality understood from the Scriptures. Thus the Holy Spirit guarded the Church from falling into error. Other practical attitudes could change according to the living experience of the Church — a dogma was irrevocable.

Bernard Anderson asked whether it was true that in the early centuries dogma was articulated in a certain mental climate or philosophy and a word like substance was interpreted in a Greek sense. Was the Roman Catholic Church committed to this kind of thinking or could it be re-expressed? Father Kaelin replied that the Church sometimes uses expressions which are borrowed from certain systems of philosophy. She could use others, but 1) when she takes over an expression from a certain philosophy, that does not mean a canonization of this philosophy; she makes this expression her own and uses it in the service of the divine revelation; 2) the Church can doubtless utilize new formulations to express doctrinal truths, but the sense of these expressions will never contradict that of the former ones, which the Church has never to renounce.

## The Bible and the Church

*A panel of three addresses followed by discussion given at the Bible Study Conference, held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, September 2-12, 1955*

Father FRANÇOIS MAIRIE BRAUN, O. P.

The first essential in any discussion on this subject is to define the meaning of the two terms. The Bible is the collection of books written under divine inspiration : they have God as their principal author and consequently contain His Word. In the Church we recognize the new Israel, the Israel of the promise : it was founded by Christ on the basis of the Apostles and remains open to all men of good will. This Church is helped by the Holy Spirit, whereas the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit. His inspiration is one thing ; His help is another. The latter consists in a multiform protection which is necessary if the Church is not to stray from the path of truth ; the former is a light and a power communicated from time to time to hagiographers and sacred writers to ensure that they write what God wants, as He wants it, taking into account, of course, their personal genius. Thus the Holy Spirit is the link between the Bible and the Church.

### *The Apostles*

Let us begin by considering the Church in the time of the Apostles. We must first be clear about the function of the Twelve. The whole New Testament clearly affirms that they are essentially ambassadors: to each of them may be applied the words of the Saviour : "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17 : 18). But a mission can only be defined in terms of its purpose. Why were the Apostles sent after Jesus ? Certainly not to replace Him, but to represent the glorified Christ visibly by proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. That is why, when He has said to them, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you", Jesus

breathes on them, adding, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20 : 22). This spirit is the Spirit of Truth ; He is given to the Apostles to remind them of all that Jesus has said (John 14 : 26). This does not only mean to recall His words to their memories, but also to reveal their fundamental meaning. It is thus that the Spirit is called to guide them (ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς) into all truth, or rather to the end of the truth (εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν) (John 16 : 13). In fact, the Twelve were enabled : 1) to expound the Scriptures — they understood them and were able to reveal what remained hidden in the Old Testament ; 2) to complete the Scriptures by writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the books of the New Testament. After them Revelation will be complete, and the collection of inspired writings finished forever : we shall never more be able to add to them.

### *The faithful*

Yet the Spirit was not given to the Apostles alone in the primitive Church. He was also sent to the faithful to make them fit to understand the teaching that was given them. We read in I John 2 : 20 : "But you have unction from the Holy One, and you all know" (or, another possible translation : you know all things). The unction here surely means the Spirit : it is necessary if divine truth is to penetrate their souls by faith. However, it does not dispense with external preaching. And St. John completes his thought by saying : "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you" (I John 2 : 24). To sum up, internal teaching by means of inner persuasion and external teaching by means of witness and preaching should go together. Without the second we should be exposed to all the illusions of illuminism, but without the former the truth would not be in us.

Nothing shows this better than the episode of the conversion of Lydia in Acts 16 : 13-15. Lydia was only a simple woman, a seller of purple in the town of Thyatira. She belonged to the small group of God-fearing people who were met together near Philippi when Paul came into the neighbourhood one Sabbath day. Luke writes about her : "The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul." She was baptized and received into the Church with all her household. We see from this that we



must be enlightened from above before we can receive the Word of God, but also that this Word must normally be heard with the outward ear before being assimilated by faith. This is surely the meaning of Romans 10 : 14ff. : "And how are they to hear without a preacher ? And how can men preach unless they are sent ? . . . Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."

But if the Word must be heard, and if to proclaim it men must be sent from God, then we see the necessity for holding fast to the apostolic traditions (*paradosis*). For this reason Paul, speaking to the Thessalonians, exhorts them : "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (II Thess. 2 : 15). By these traditions (oral and literary) we mean the doctrine revealed to the Apostles and communicated by them to the Church. Coming directly from God, this doctrine is naturally superior both to the Scriptures and to preaching : these are only the organs through which it comes to us.

### *Guidance in the Scriptures*

Let us go back to the function of interpreting the Scriptures which devolved upon the Twelve. Let me apply it to another story of *metanoia* or conversion found in Acts 8 : 26-39, the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, a functionary of great authority in the court of Queen Candace. He was returning from Jerusalem where he had been on pilgrimage. We come upon him on his return journey, sitting in his chariot, absorbed in reading the Prophet Isaiah. While he was meditating on the passage about the Suffering Servant (Is. 53), the Holy Spirit drove Philip, one of the seven deacons instituted by the Twelve, to the place where the Ethiopian was slowly pursuing his way. Having joined him, Philip asks him, "Do you understand what you are reading ?" The other replies : "How can I, except some one guides me ?" Let us remember the word "guide" (ὁδηγῆσαι). It is the word used in the promise made to the Apostles in John 16 : 13. The Spirit is sent to the Twelve to guide them into all truth ; in their turn, directly or through their delegates, they are bidden to guide men in order to help them to understand the truth con-

tained in Scripture. Invited to get up on to the chariot, Philip then explains to the eunuch the meaning of the prophetic words. After which, having preached Jesus unto him, he baptizes him and leaves him full of joy.

As with Lydia, the opening of the heart, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of baptism follow a regular order. In other words, the search for truth and the explanation of the Scripture, culminating in the proclamation of the Gospel, meet each other ; the one and the other prepare for entry into the Church where the Christian is put in possession of all revealed truth.

### *Scripture and tradition*

What shall we say now of the Church of post-apostolic times ? We are still faced with the same problem. The Scripture remains full of mysteries ; we still need to try to read it as far as possible in depth. We continue to be concerned with the real, but often hidden, meanings of the Old Testament, on which the New Testament must throw its light. As for the New Testament itself, we could not claim that the Apostles, and the other inspired writers who depended on them, have expressed their thought perfectly at the first attempt. The Apostles' knowledge of revealed truth will still exceed our own. At school with Christ and with the Holy Spirit, they entered further into the mystery of salvation than the Prophets could ; they will be our masters until the end of time. At the same time, the Apostles have neither made explicit nor formulated from the beginning all that was implied by their statements. Let us think, for instance, of the divinity of Christ, of the equality of the Father and the Son, of the distinction between the two natures, of the unity of the Person of the Word Incarnate : in short, of all that the Church was called on to define at the early councils in the face of trinitarian and christological heresies.

Hence the necessity of a permanent *magisterium* to ensure the infallible transmission of the apostolic tradition, either by preserving it from error, or by giving to men in every age a clearer and more penetrating expression of the divine message. The word of the Ethiopian eunuch will not cease to make itself heard : "How can I understand unless some one guides me ?"

But the apostolic *paradosis*, let us remember, is not transmitted solely, or even chiefly, through Scripture. We are certainly right in thinking that the whole of the writings of the New Testament contains all the essential of revelation. We have not the right, however, to think that alongside the inspired writings there is no place for the oral traditions communicated with the living voice to the Church. The problem of Scripture and tradition is, therefore, inevitable. We only run the risk of distorting it if we exaggerate the distance which separates them, as though, to use a frivolous image, it were permissible to compare them to two taps pouring water into the same basin. Such a conception would work in favour of the laziness of theologians by dispensing them of their duty to search the Scriptures. Tradition, as we understand it, is much more what constitutes the setting of life from which Scripture cannot be torn away, because it is as we read it in this setting that it yields up its authentic doctrine to us: the oral preaching of the Apostles was necessary to create the spiritual atmosphere in which it should find its natural and indispensable context. Instead of making an inventory of the traditional truths which do not figure in the Bible, it would be more worthwhile to try to read the Scripture in the spirit of the Church, in the belief that belonged to it from the beginning, in the attitude of faith and openness to the supernatural world that it never ceases to recommend.

#### *A divinely-assisted magisterium*

Now we make the point again that this presupposes in the Church the presence of a living *magisterium* whose role consists neither in weakening nor in overloading the revelation given once for all (*ephapax*) to the Apostles, but in ensuring that it is handed on further, and in discovering its unfathomable riches. Thus to assert the need for a permanent *magisterium* in the Church is not in any degree to claim that the privileged function of the Twelve could be assumed by others after them, but it is to distinguish in the apostolic charge between the incommunicable gifts of grace in relation to the founding of the Church, and the communicable powers of government and teaching necessary for its preservation and its progress.

The scriptural basis of this continuity is nowhere more clearly affirmed than in the words of the risen Christ : "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28 : 18-20). One may add to this the passage from the high-priestly prayer : "I do not pray for these only but also for those who are to believe in me through their word, that they may all be one" (John 17 : 20-21a).

We need to know whether the promises made to the Twelve concern them only, and not those who must continue after them to preach the Word in order to realize unity in the knowledge of faith and in love ; or whether we must admit that there is a break, and hence a change between the essential structure of the Church in the days of the Apostles and its essential structure in the course of its history. From the Catholic point of view no hesitation is possible.

But when we bring in a divinely-assisted *magisterium* to succeed the Apostolate and say that they are homogeneous, do not let us forget what are their distinctive qualities. As the founders, the Apostles were blessed with exceptional gifts and powers : they received direct from Christ and the Holy Spirit all revealed truth of which they must have had nothing less than a global understanding. The *magisterium* is only the trustee and the manager of this revelation. To this end, having fixed the limits, it must then preserve intact the collection (or canon) of the inspired writings ; to give the meaning of difficult words about which it is important for us to be accurately informed ; to prevent the doctrine proclaimed from the beginning from suffering mutations, alterations through the hazards of private exegesis ; to stimulate the theological study of the Bible with respect for the literal meaning at its different levels.

This being said, we shall not be in danger of exalting the *magisterium* unduly. Over it is the Spirit who bloweth where He listeth, and continues to illuminate inwardly all those whom His light will reach. The Church itself, moreover, never ceases to call upon the Holy Spirit ; it asks Him to open our hearts, as the Lord did to Lydia, that the truth may enter into us. Knowing



that it has no right either to judge the Scripture or to stray from the apostolic teaching, it confines itself to exposition of both. Its duty being not to innovate but to pass on a living Word, which needs to be forever thought out anew in terms of the questions which are put to it, its doctrinal ministry is literally a service. If it performs this service well, it will humbly recognize itself in the person of the servant entrusted with his master's goods.

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W. A. VISSER 'T HOOFT

Any discussion of the Bible today takes place in a paradoxical setting. There is clearly a decrease in general knowledge of the Bible among common people, but at another level there is a most remarkable return to the Bible.

When I compare the place of the Bible today with that of my earlier university days, I can see a definite contrast. At that time everything was done to make us think that the Bible was a strange book out of another world which spoke to us from far away and long ago. But now we see that the Bible is not just history, but a book that speaks to us today. And we know better that the Bible is not merely a collection of literature, but a unity.

The book by Father Braun, *Aspects nouveaux du problème de l'Eglise*, illustrates the rise of biblical interest on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. In both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles, however, very little of this new concern has been communicated to the masses. Our biblical revival is still an affair of the few. How little effective biblical preaching there is today, preaching which is qualitatively different from other kinds of human discourse! In the realm of teaching, too, very little has been done to help lay people to read the Bible in the way it should be read.

*Points of agreement*

There are basic theological problems to be taken into account in discussing the Bible and the Church. Two hundred years ago such a discussion would have been much more difficult than it is now. For one thing, Protestants no longer talk of the unimportance of tradition. I shall speak, therefore, of certain agreements within which there are disagreements. There are at least four points where we are one.

1. None of us say we believe in a book. All of us say we believe in a person.

2. We acknowledge a difference between apostolic and post-apostolic times. There is a validity of the apostolic witness in the New Testament which gives to that witness a place apart and makes it a criterion, a canon.

3. We have a canon of Scripture, a certain number of books ; those books and no others form the New Testament. There is a question as to what that canon really represents. We are near to the consensus that the canon is not a creation of the Church on its own authority. The canon has been given to the Church and the Church recognizes in the canon the Word of God. "Here is where you must expect to hear the Word of God."

4. The Bible is never apart from the Church. When Calvin speaks of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, he says that the Spirit is always the Spirit in the Church. It was also he who said, "No-one can have God as his Father who does not have the Church as his Mother."

*Points of difference*

But although both Protestants and Roman Catholics say that the Bible is never apart from the Church, there are different views about the meaning of this affirmation. Roman Catholics say that the Bible is part of the total life of the Church in such a way that it cannot stand over against the Church. The Church realizes increasingly what is in this Bible. Protestants admit that the Bible is the product of "tradition". But since the Church has once recognized the canon, the Bible has a place all by itself. In a very real way, the Bible stands also over against the Church.

Protestants count always with the possibility of a break between the Bible and the Church. The Bible is that by which the Church is constantly judged. Most of our problems, therefore, are in the realm of what we say about the Church.

In modern Roman Catholic theology, the Church is the Body of Christ and there is complete identity. In Protestant theology, even within the Body of Christ, Christ remains the Head and there is never total identity. This becomes clear when we interpret the image of the Body in the light of the image of the people of God. Surely the break between the Lord and His people is a constant danger (I Cor. 10). Church history is a series of resurrections of the Church. The Church must be willing to be renewed by the Word of God. This involves purification and reformation.

Finally, let us not think that the actual situation of the Bible in the Church is the same as the theoretical or theological situation. The Bible has a way of reasserting itself despite theological formulations. There are many ways of silencing the Bible: clericalism, a purely academic approach, sectarian prejudice, and so forth. Let each one of us ask what is the particular way in which we are silencing the Bible, and then resolve to silence that which hinders us from hearing the Word in all its freshness.

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### HELLE GEORGIADIS

For the Orthodox there is no separation between Church and Bible. The Church is the community to which the Bible is addressed, in which the Bible is read, with which the Word of God abides. Our faith is founded not on a book but in a Person, and we, as Christians, "are committed not to a book, but to a Person, even to Our Lord Jesus Christ, 'made of a woman' in these 'last days' ".<sup>1</sup>

When we assemble in church to worship God, we meet under the sign of Christ the Pantokrator, which traditionally is depicted

<sup>1</sup> Cf. George Florovsky, *Sobornost*, Series 3, No. 14, p. 88.

in the dome of the church building. He who reigns in majesty is Light, Life, Truth : to be worshipped and to communicate Himself to all members of the Church as the Light, the Life, and the Truth. The Scriptures are one mode of His presence with us in the Church, as the Word of God, and one mode of His communication to us of Himself as Life, Light and Truth. For this reason the Scriptures are first of all sacred books, and as such are to be venerated, for much the same reason as Ikons are venerated : because they not only represent the things of God to us, but they are a meeting-place with God, and a channel through which we participate in the mysteries of God when we read the Scriptures within the Church.

The Scriptures, and more especially the Gospels, have a sacramental character. The book of the Gospels used in the liturgical services of the Church is richly bound and adorned as a symbol of this, and it is venerated by the faithful after matins, which precedes the Holy Liturgy.

When the Scriptures are read, it is the Holy Spirit which quickens — gives life to — the written words, and recreates and vivifies in us (not merely in our intellectual understanding) the mysteries of which the Scriptures speak. This action of the Holy Spirit makes of each Bible reading a kind of pentecostal event, and because of this, it is the Church corporately which is able to receive the Word of God in its fulness.

When Jesus left the disciples and ascended into heaven to the Father, it was not a book which He promised to leave with them but the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. The picture of Pentecost recorded in Acts (1 : 8-14) is still for us the type of the Church — those gathered together in the name of Jesus in “the upper room” with the Apostles, continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, in faith and in expectancy of the Lord’s coming. The traditional scheme of decoration inside Orthodox churches offers a visual reminder of this scene. It is in this setting that the faithful assemble to read the Holy Scriptures and to receive the Holy Spirit, who will reveal all things to their understanding.

In this context of Pentecost we are also reminded that the gathering of the faithful is within a hierarchical structure. In Acts, the Apostles and Mary, the mother of Jesus, alone are



mentioned by name. The naming of Mary, the Theotokos, is especially significant, and her pre-eminence in the Church derives not from the apostolic commission but from her unique relationship to the Holy Spirit and to the Word of God. In consequence, she retains for all time and eternity the place of supreme honour among creatures in the Church. The Scriptures are entrusted to the whole Church, but the authoritative teaching rests with the Bishops. Thus, though all may read the Scriptures, only the Bishops and those to whom they have given authority may preach in the Church.

### *The Bible and church services*

The Lord Jesus Christ who is revealed to us in the Scriptures is the same Lord who is present in the Sacraments of the Church. He is the unity of Word and Sacrament. It may be useful to recall here that the services of the Orthodox Church are woven of the fabric of the Scriptures.

1. In the divine office, vespers, matins and the hours, and in the services for administering the Sacraments of the Church, passages from the Old and New Testaments are read. For the Holy Liturgy, daily readings are appointed from the Gospel, Acts and Epistles, which are designed to cover the whole New Testament in the course of the year.

2. God is praised in the words of the psalms and canticles of the Bible, and the hymns of the Orthodox Church (this is especially marked in the early ones) are built up as a *catena* of texts and allusions from the Bible. The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, used in Lent, is a striking example of this.

3. The Sacraments of the Church set forth the mysteries of which the Scriptures speak.

4. The principal events concerning the Incarnation are recalled in the observance of the liturgical year of the Church's calendar, and, to a lesser degree, in the weekly cycle. This is more than a mere commemoration ; it is for the Church a renewal of the mysteries which the events signify.

Thus the Orthodox Church lives out the Bible in its daily worship year by year.

*Private reading of the Bible*

The Orthodox Church upholds the principle that the Bible should be in the vernacular. In practice this has come to mean, in many cases, that the Bible is available in an archaic form of the vernacular, the language of the people when the local church was first formed there. The problem of modern language versions is for various reasons complex, but more recently has received attention and is at present very much under discussion.

For historical and geographical reasons, a rural organization and culture was retained in Orthodox countries far longer than in the West. Illiteracy was quite common until one or two generations ago. This meant that for centuries, and even today, the Bible was received principally orally. This manner of receiving the Bible seems to have a certain psychological effect. Hearing fosters memory and leads to meditation of a pious, devotional kind. Analysis and textual criticism come more readily to those who are habitually confronted with the written text. Moreover, to hear the Word of God chiefly, if not exclusively, in church, is to receive it authoritatively, and also to receive it communally. Thus the characteristic approach of Orthodox to Bible study is still very largely pious and devotional, and not scientific; exegesis is homiletical rather than critical, and still follows very closely in the traditions of the Fathers, especially St. John Chrysostom.

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## DISCUSSION

*Fr. Braun* : The Roman Catholic Church has progressed a great deal during the last fifty years in this matter. This is seen in the Bible Movement, the papal encyclical on the Bible, and the Bible institutes at Rome and at Jerusalem. The spirit, too, has changed from the apologetic to one of research, scholarship, and real searching of the Scriptures. The Bible is a meeting-point with Protestants, and we owe much to Protestant scholarship carried on in this same spirit.

We do not separate tradition and Scripture. Scripture contains the primitive tradition. On the other hand, we cannot separate later tradition either, as it is assisted by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, tradition is not Scripture, and Scripture is not tradition, but they are intimately linked one with the other.

*Dr. Visser 't Hooft* : Is not our problem mainly ecclesiological ? We do not have a common conception of the relation of the Bible to the Church, but only a common conception of the Bible.

*Braun* : Agreed.

*Visser 't Hooft* : But can we not agree to some extent on the Church ?

*Braun* : There is a certain common notion of the people of God, and the old and new Israel. But the content and meaning of the new Israel is not the same for Catholic and Protestant. The new Israel has the gift of the Spirit. The Church is the Body of Christ and is animated by the Spirit of Christ. The same cannot be said of the Old Testament, where the unity was only a covenant. In the Church, however, the Christians are still exposed to sin. But there is a distinction between the members of the Church and the Church itself, the Body of Christ. In this sense the Church does not sin. The Church is also the Bride of Christ and conserves the treasure which the *Fiancé* has given, the treasure of revealed truth.

*Dr. Anderson* : In the last analysis, it is Christ who defines the demarcation between the Church and the Bible. If this is so, how can we determine who is the true *magisterium* ? Is not a personal encounter between God and man possible outside the Church, such as with Buber and Kierkegaard ? How can we distinguish between the true *magisterium* and that which is not authoritative ?

*Braun* : Christ not only founded the Church, but will be with it until the end. His Spirit is in the Church, and is the source of light and truth. He wants the Church to remain as founded in the purity of the teaching, and has, therefore, given an organ of conservation and transmission — the twelve Apostles, the Ecumenical Councils of the Church. They defined the primitive faith,

and because of this we have a criterion to eliminate what is contrary to the teaching.

We have next the difficulty about corrupt traditions. We are modern men, exposed to destructive powers. The Bible contains the canon, and this carries the primitive faith of the Apostles. But when this is submitted to exegesis, we see contrary views in the Bible. Therefore the Bible cannot be left to private interpretation. We need an authority within the Church which succeeds, but does not replace, that of the Apostles. When assisted by the Holy Spirit, it is capable of judging, not the Scriptures, but the proper interpretation of them. The biblical foundation is in the Apostles, and authority has been given to those who have succeeded them to keep this tradition intact.

*Miss Giles* : Would we conclude from this that the Roman Catholics can study the Bible only in the presence of, and in communication with, authority ?

*Braun* : Let us say rather that, in maintaining contact with authority, the Catholic seeks the guide which will prevent him from falling into error. This said, the fact remains that God is free to bestow His Spirit as He wills and upon whom He wills. Every man who reads the Bible with a receptive heart can, therefore, find in it the truth, and encounter there the Word which God wills him to hear. However, the revealed truth, the articles of faith, provide in addition the spiritual climate in which to read the Bible. In the Bible there is no sentence contrary to the articles of faith. But to enter into the Word we have none the less need of the light of the Spirit. That is why we pray to the Holy Spirit, and by exegesis try to understand the meaning of the text objectively. On difficult and obscure points, I refer to the witness of the Church to find out whether it corresponds to my reading of the text.

*Giles* : What of the person who is not theologically trained ?

*Braun* : If in difficulty, he consults the priest for confirmation. A large realm of private interpretation exists, however, for very little has been definitively determined.

*Dr. Winter* : Tradition has, in this discussion, acquired a special meaning which was not clear in the first presentation of



Fr. Braun, and with which I could agree. If we take, for instance, the struggle of Paul with the Jerusalem Church, the witness of the Apostles is not clear. It was Jewish. The Holy Spirit broke through this tradition, as it can break through all tradition. The word "tradition" had to be defined.

*Pastor Hamel* : I remember a leading Roman Catholic who disagreed with the theory of the assumption of the Blessed Virgin. But once it was proclaimed as a dogma of the Church, he refused to discuss it any more. What, then, is the task of the teaching ministry of the Church ? It, as well as private interpretation, can be mistaken.

*Braun* : The Apostles received the revelation of Christ, and then transmitted this. This is the revealed deposit of truth. It contains everything that is essential for salvation. We have next the second tradition (*paradosis*). The first had special *charisma* ; the second is *magisterium*.

The assumption of the Virgin is not explicitly recorded in Holy Scripture or the primitive tradition. It was defined by the Pope and Catholics have to accept this. Why ? It has been in the living tradition of the Church, and is perhaps implicit in Holy Scripture in "full of grace". The Church becomes aware of certain fundamental truths under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is implicit, or practically so. This doctrine is virtually accepted in the doctrine of the immaculate conception, proclaimed in 1854. Even though, therefore, the scriptural foundation may be doubtful, the *magisterium* is competent to judge with the help of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the assumption, it is a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the immaculate conception. If Mary was preserved from sin, she could not be subjected to the dominion of death. We cannot forget the "through sin death" of Romans 5 : 12. It is this link between preservation from sin and liberation from death which the Church reveals to us in the case of Mary. We have become aware of something which has always been embedded in the Scriptures. From the Catholic point of view, which holds that the Spirit is given to the Church that it may understand the revelation given both in the Scriptures and in tradition, the doctrine of the assumption presents no difficulty.

# **THE STUDENT WORLD CHRONICLE**

Reports produced by the Bible Study Conference,  
Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland  
September 2-12, 1955

## **Bible Study for Members of Different Confessions**

Those of us who met together for the Bible Study Conference of the WSCF held at Bossey from September 2-12, 1955, wish to place on record our thankfulness to God for the help which we have received from each other.

We recognize that our knowledge of Jesus Christ was deepened and our love for Him was purified by that which we learned from each other as we shared together in Bible study.

Remembering Christ's prayer for unity, *all Christians hope that their desire to be faithful to the Word of God will bring them continually nearer to the unity willed by their Lord.*

From the experience we gained at this conference we should like to offer the following observations and suggestions.

I. In the common Bible study among people of different confessions the difference of the authorities to which they are bound in their exposition of the Scriptures will make itself evident.

These differences should be recognized.

A. Under the present type of Bible study group, the Orthodox feel themselves constrained by some Protestant presuppositions which are taken for granted in the approach adopted, although they have no objection to, or difficulty in, using the actual technics.

For the Orthodox, the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church is in continuity from the time of the Apostles to the present day. Therefore, it is not possible to make an isolated confrontation between ourselves today and the Bible, but our confrontation with the Bible must be within the context of the witness of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Church and the experience of the life of the Spirit and the response of the faithful to this in

understanding and interpreting the revelation of God down the ages. The Bible is approached in the light of the Holy Spirit, invoked for His illumination for us and also in the light given by Him to the Fathers of the Church and to the Ecumenical Councils.

*The Orthodox would recommend that the writings of the patristic period on the exegesis of the Bible should be given a definite place in ecumenical Bible study.* This would place the Orthodox participation in Bible study groups in a truer perspective than is at present possible, and also make their understanding of the Bible clearer to those from Protestant traditions.

B. A Protestant position might be characterized in the following way: (N. B. — There are some within the Catholic tradition who, while not members of the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches, would state their position very differently.)

"Protestants also read the Bible in the context of the exposition which has existed in the history of the Church since the days of the Apostles and in which there can be great help for every generation of Bible readers.

"There is, on the other hand, no compulsion for them to bind themselves absolutely to a traditional exposition. For both the expositions which have been given in the course of the Church's history and the dogmas of the Church have present validity only to the extent that the Church finds their confirmation as it listens to the Scriptures anew.

"Through the work of the Holy Spirit the supreme authority is found in the Word of the Living God in Scripture, and not in an exposition tied to a particular age, nor a fixed dogma, nor the teaching office of the Church. These have their authority only beneath, and not on the same level or indeed above, the Word of God in the Scriptures. The Church is founded upon this alone, but at the same time it assumes a critical — that is, judging and purifying — position over against the Church."

## II. *Some practical suggestions*

A. The ecumenical composition of a Bible study group introduces its own complicating factor. It is therefore recommended that, in order to obtain the fullest value from such a meeting, the technical framework and procedure of study should be as clear and as simple as possible.

1. At conferences, or study sessions extended over limited periods of time, it is especially important that there should be good leaders and that there should be *continuity of leadership*

throughout the course of the Bible study. For this reason the principle of rotating leadership within a group is felt to be undesirable.

In certain cases where there are several parallel groups, it might, however, be helpful for the groups to exchange leaders on a rotating system.

The leaders of the Bible study groups should be trained and briefed as thoroughly as possible by an experienced teacher.

2. The period of private study for a group should be directed and the participants receive guidance as to the most profitable questions to raise.

B. *A real ecumenical encounter is only possible between those who know their own faith* and are aware of the teaching of their Church on general doctrinal issues.

In particular, for conferences among group leaders, participants should be chosen who are mature representatives of their respective traditions.

C. If the Bible study takes place in the context of an ecumenical meeting, it is recommended that either it should be on a single book of the Bible or one theme only should be chosen, and this theme followed through and studied *consistently* throughout the Bible in order to avoid dissipating the discussion by ranging too widely.

It is suggested that in certain cases and especially with groups where a theological training cannot be assumed, an *exposition of the theme should be given at the outset from the main theological stand-points represented.*

## BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

### *Some general principles*

I. The aim of Bible study is to discover the Word of God. The Bible is the Word of God, in the sense that it enshrines the message of judgment, forgiveness, renewal and command which came to the Prophets and which found its perfect fulfilment in Jesus Christ. In affirming this we are not denying the human authorship of the books contained in the Bible. The men who wrote these books belonged to a particular civilization in a particular age. Each of them was influenced by a particular historical situation. And they were — in the fullest sense — free men, who expressed in their own words



convictions belonging either to themselves or to their contemporaries. But they were also inspired men. They wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit and as witnesses to the living God revealed in Jesus Christ. *The Bible is therefore a witness to Jesus Christ*, and those who read it in faith and under the illumination of the Holy Spirit hear His Word. This is God's Word, the creative Word which was entrusted to the Apostles and which the Church and the SCM are called to serve. A distinctive feature about this Word is that it is in a sense supernatural ; it is not of us, but comes to us.

"The Word of the Lord that *came* unto Hosea..."

"The Son of Man is *come*..."

"He *came* unto his own..."

Bible study is not merely a literary exercise ; it is an attempt to discover the mind of God, in the course of which He may — and does — speak to us. Therefore, although we criticize and judge the Bible, we do so only as those who stand under its authority and judgment.

II. Our Bible study groups are informal, and members of the groups are always free to express their own views. In fact, however, there are limits to this freedom inspired by the nature of our Christian calling. We do not think of ourselves as uncommitted, solitary Christians. *We meet as members of the Church* ; we are constantly aware of our dependence on the teaching and Sacraments of the Church, and we regard our study as part of the life of the Church. Further, we can say that we study the Bible within the community of those who have believed throughout the ages. The wisdom of this community, both past and present, is indispensable to us. *A group in which every member has spoken, but which has listened only to its own voice, may misinterpret the Bible or even silence it.*

This carries important implications concerning our attitude to the spokesmen and leaders of the Church. While the meaning of the Bible is inexhaustible, in the study of any one passage certain questions will be related to its central meaning, and others will not. Here the guidance of experts (ministers and teachers of theology) can be of help in distinguishing between what is central and what is peripheral. *A group should make sure that it is making the fullest use of such people.* On the other hand, it is essential that each student study the Bible for himself. While we live within the Church, the Holy Spirit speaks to us also as individuals and as small groups. To hear the Bible expounded is not always to understand the full meaning God would reveal to us through it. Hence the importance of the participation of each person. This involves a real intellectual and spiritual effort.

*Student pastors and others charged with the responsibility of helping students study the Bible should realize that the study of a particular passage is not necessarily completed when they have finished their exposition.*

III. The best Bible study groups are those in which each member contributes. This cannot be achieved without adequate preparation. We often forget the reward that is offered for intellectual effort. "Ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We need to work on the passages chosen for study, and in doing this we usually have to consider at least three questions :

A. *What is the literary character of the text ?* (Is it an historical narrative, for instance, or an allegory, or a hymn, or a parable, or part of a letter ?) What did the author have in mind when he wrote it ? What were the verses intended to mean ? What is their plain sense ? To answer this the group needs some information about the circumstances in which the passage was written, and about the obscure phrases, images and historical allusions in the text. Most study groups will need the help of a study outline and of a good commentary. The ideal arrangement is for various members of the group to use different commentaries.

B. *How does this passage contribute to the whole biblical revelation ?* What the Bible says in any one place — about grace, judgment, repentance, or hope, for instance — is only a part of the whole and needs to be related to the rest. Whatever subject we may be studying, it may be said that we are interested not merely in what Hosea says, or in what Paul says, but in what the Bible says as a whole. At one stage in our thinking we must try to relate the teaching of one passage with that of other passages. We compare text with text. In studying a passage in the Old Testament, we should try to understand its relation to the New Testament and especially the Gospels. There a concordance and a theological reference book can be very helpful.

C. *What has this passage to say to us today ?* Concerning my family ? Concerning me ? We have to relate our academic study to the various spheres of our everyday life ; and this includes — whether we be scientists, lawyers, doctors, teachers or ministers — the problems involved in our daily work. It is important that we try to relate our biblical thinking to our other intellectual pursuits. The way in which this is done will depend on the nature of the group. Two things may be said about this. First, study

groups *should not make a practice of searching the Bible for easy practical solutions to their personal problems.* The Bible is not a text-book on ethics, and if we approach a particular passage merely to extract some ideas or principles which seem to us to be particularly relevant, we shall probably miss its real meaning. Secondly, the living Word which comes to us through the Bible is always (if not obviously) relevant to these problems, and if we approach the text with an open mind we should expect to derive some help towards the solution of them. Although these practical and immediate issues are often uppermost in our minds, we should make every effort to allow the Bible to speak for itself. Many members of the group — scientists, for example, who have difficulty in reconciling the scientific attitude to life with the Christian attitude, and medicals and teachers beset by professional problems of an ethical nature — should be encouraged to apply the insights gained from their study of the Bible to these other spheres of thought. In applying our Bible study to present-day situations, the following sources of help are available :

1. Prepared questions, provided either in the study outline or by the leader.

2. A time of quiet, either during the period of study or afterwards, in which the members of the group can reflect and meditate and allow their imaginations to roam freely. (We must overcome our fear of silence.)

3. The discipline of preparing an article or a short prayer, based on the passage.

4. A book on ethics or apologetics (or any other subject related to the discussion but not strictly relevant to the passage) which may occasionally be recommended for private reading.

IV. Experience over many years has shown that the value of study groups depends very largely on the persons who lead them. Some Movements stand in urgent need of a booklet or leaflet offering advice to study group leaders, and for courses of training, on practical questions such as the following :

A. What qualifications are required of a leader ? They are not all intellectual. Leadership requires a certain pastoral sensitivity — an understanding of people, a good deal of patience, sometimes a good deal of firmness, the ability to evoke discussion and “make everyone talk” — as well as a knowledge of the subject.

B. What is the best way of using specialists — especially theologians ?

C. What is the best way of using the time available ? Should there be an introductory exposition ? If so, of what length ? Is it necessary to arrive at conclusions and produce a summary ? Should loose ends be tied up, or left loose ?

D. Should meetings be opened and closed with prayer ?

E. What opportunities exist for arranging "mixed" Bible study groups of Christians and non-Christians ? Many who do not share our faith undoubtedly share many of our interests, ambitions and hopes, and some of these are very willing to join a Bible study group, provided they can feel that they really "belong" and are present "on equal terms", and not as outsiders. Should such people be invited to our groups ? The evangelistic possibilities deserve consideration. Some Movements have found that in "mixed" groups of this kind there is some advantage in choosing a biblical theme (such as "justice" or "peace" or "love") rather than a book of the Bible as the subject for study.

### BIBLE STUDY TECHNICS

Technics in Bible study are unimportant, because it is only the power of the Holy Spirit, and not technic, which guarantees the communication of the biblical message. But at the same time, and for the same reason, Bible study technics are most important. They are used by the Holy Spirit, and therefore we have to employ all our intellect and imagination to find out the most adequate means.

As a preface to any discussion of technics, it is essential to recognize that good Bible study can only be done in the context of a living, active Christian community. *The image suggested by D. T. Niles, that the Bible is "food for wrestlers", is a reminder that unless we are actively engaged in the struggle of the Christian life, Bible study is completely unnecessary.*

The best technic differs from text to text, from group to group, and from situation to situation. We can never find the best technic in general. We have to free ourselves from set forms and invent the most adequate technic for every new concrete text, group and situation. The following hints do not give a survey of possible technics, nor do they offer any guarantee of being applicable in every situation. Rather they are intended to stimulate our own creative, intellectual and imaginative thinking.



### I. *Group work*

A small biblical truth which we discover ourselves and make our own is worth much more than many great biblical truths which we just read or hear. Such discoveries are very difficult to make when we are in large meetings or when we are alone. It is most often in dialogues that the words of the Bible become the Word of the living God.

Therefore, *the work of small groups is and remains essential for study*. What Suzanne de Diétrich<sup>1</sup> and Marie-Jeanne de Haller<sup>2</sup> said about it still remains relevant for us. Their insistence that a Bible study group is not a theological debating club, not a hot-house where we meet to share "religious experiences", not a place where we sit and listen to monologues, is relevant to the application of any technic. Likewise the central idea affirmed by both authors, that the characteristic of Bible study is that it is an enterprise undertaken together to penetrate more deeply into the understanding of the Bible and to listen together to what God wishes to say to us, is an underlying presupposition of all methods mentioned here. We shall not enlarge further on what is already stated very clearly by those experienced leaders of Bible study. We only want to indicate some ways which we think should also be considered. All these *new ways* lay a special stress on *full participation by all members of the group*. Another important book on Bible study, to be published by the SCM Press, is written by Hans-Ruedi Weber and is based on experiments among illiterates on the mission field<sup>3</sup>.

### II. *Drama in Bible study*

The use of drama is rightly being recovered by the Church today. The Bible is the account of the great drama of the history of salvation, and all Bible stories are scenes, fragments, or facets of this greatest drama ever played. It is still an unfinished drama and every one of us is called to play his role in it.

Bible study means to watch this drama, to discover our role, and to begin to play it. Therefore, Bible study has to be "dramatic". There are four different levels of dramatic Bible study :

A. *The dramatic understanding of a text*. What is the place of this text in the whole of the great drama ? Is it a scene, a fragment of dialogue, or what ? What are the sub-scenes, and in

<sup>1</sup> *Discovering the Bible*, Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> *A Living Record*, Chapters I and III.

<sup>3</sup> *The Communication of the Gospel*.

which ways does the dialogue develop ? With whom do we meet ? What is the theme of the dialogue and where does the plot lie ? Another way of dramatic understanding is the following : different persons in the group may be asked to re-think and re-tell (or re-write) the Bible story from the point of view of one of the characters in the text.

B. *Presentation through dialogue.* Some texts can best be presented by reading them in separate parts or voices. Psalms or the Passion Story become suddenly much more real through such simple representation of the dialogue.

C. *Presentation through pantomime.* Some texts — for example parables — can best be presented by pantomime. The text may be read by someone during the acting.

D. *Presentation through full drama.* The text is presented with dialogue and action.

1. We may try to stay as near as possible to the text, presenting it in its biblical setting and language.

2. We may also make a modern transposition of the text, presenting it in our contemporary language and setting.

### III. *Imagination in Bible study*

Through the Bible God challenges man. It is not only our intellect and thinking He challenges, but also our *imagination*. God speaks to us in words, as well as in images, and tokens or symbols. Therefore we shall never fully understand a Bible passage if we reduce its message to merely abstract terms. We have to pray that the Holy Spirit will open our intellect and our imagination so that *God can speak to the whole man* in us.

A. *The message through images.* What images do we see in our text, e. g. fire, snake, water, etc. ? What is the meaning of these images throughout the Bible (is its meaning the same in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and in the present day) ? Try to make a scenario for "shooting" a film on this text. (Are there "close-ups" ? Are there "film-rhythms" ? And is there a "film-symbolic" in this text ?) Try to visualize this passage through simple drawings, with some geometrical lines or with a sequence of very simple sketches.

B. *The message through symbols.* The symbol expresses in an outward sign the result of a meditation. It may be a symbolic

action (as the washing of the feet in John 13) ; or a story (as the parables) ; or simply a form (as the Cross). It is always the condensation of the very heart of the matter.

Try to find a modern analogy or parable for the message of the text. *How could the message be condensed in, and communicated through, a symbolic action ?* Is the message of this text expressed in the sign of the Cross, or in other ancient Christian symbols ? Try to draw a modern symbol for the message of this text.

#### IV. Bible study and worship

One of the most important contexts of Bible study is its relation with worship. *Therefore, we should always make links between the text and the different elements of worship.* Some of the links to be borne in mind are the following :

A. *Prayer.* Is our text a prayer, and if so, what sort of prayer ? Write a prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition, or intercession, based on this text, and pray it.

B. *Confession of sin.* Use this text as a basis of self-examination and focus the results of this self-examination on a confession of sin.

C. *Confession of faith.* What does this text reveal about God, Christ, the Church, man, the world and its history ? What does it reveal about the relationship between God and man, etc. ? What part of our Creed is lit up in a special way by this text ?

D. *The Sacraments.* What is the relation of this text to baptism and Holy Communion ? What new aspect in the Sacraments does this text reveal ?

#### V. The dynamic of Bible study

The Word of the living God has power (dynamism) which smashes the old man and the old world and which re-creates a new man and a new world. What then must *happen* in and through our Bible study ?

A. *Confrontation.* Which popular proverbs, modern slogans, and songs are especially challenged by the message of this text (in these proverbs, slogans and songs you will often find a whole pagan philosophy which is smashed by the biblical message) ? What are the old and new heresies, sects, and philosophies challenged by this text ? Prepare a Bible study outline for someone else to use.

B. *Actualization*. Read a newspaper article on a burning issue of the present, then make a Bible study on a text which deals with a similar issue — compare the biblical and newspaper attitudes to this issue. An opposite technic is to re-write a Bible text in present-day language to become an article which could be inserted in a daily newspaper.

C. *Recreation*. What does God want to change in my personal life, my family, our SCM community, and our student society, if this text really is to be taken seriously? How can I personally, and how can we as a group, engage in the changes necessary?

Both sin and re-creation begin in the realm of relationships. Keeping a particular person or social group in mind, re-study the text in the context of this person or group. What does this text mean for me in my relationship with this particular person or group?

D. *Witness*. We are called to be witnesses of Jesus. Let us always examine the ways in which this text affects our witness.

To whom have we to witness now? How can we make a witness through *koinonia* (how can this person become a member of the new community in Christ)? How can I make a witness through *diakonia* (what Christian service of love does this person need, and how can I help to give this service)? How can I witness to the *kerygma* of this text (how can I communicate directly the message of this text to that person)?

## How to Prepare to Lead Bible Study

D. T. NILES

### *What the Bible is about*

The first thing which a person must keep in mind in preparing to study any passage of the Bible, or any theme in the Bible, is what the Bible is about. I want to underline one truth: the whole Bible is a testimony to Jesus Christ. In John 20:31, St. John says, "These are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." What is true of the Gospel of John is true of the whole Bible. In John 5:39 we read, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me." There Jesus is talking about the Scriptures of the Jews. In other words, all



the Scriptures are concerned with bearing witness to Jesus Christ, as the Christ, the Son of God. And they are concerned with so bearing witness that the world may listen, understand, believe, and believing enter into the inheritance, which is life. God has acted on behalf of man through Jesus Christ, and He demands the obedience of faith. You remember the commission in Matthew 28 : 20, "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." It is not enough simply to say that He demands faith ; we must say the obedience of faith. This same idea is in Romans 1 : 5, where Paul talks about calling the nations to the obedience of faith. In other words, when we prepare any passage of the Scriptures, there always must be consciously present in our mind three statements : First, this passage of the Scriptures is about Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter whether you choose a passage from Numbers or one from St. Mark's Gospel. You have to start with the assumption that it is about Jesus Christ. Second, you must say to yourself, "The intention of Bible study is to help people to believe." And third, you must say to yourself, 'We must help them so to believe that they are led to the next step in obedience.'

### *The context of the passage*

The next thing is to try to understand the context of the passage in terms of the whole Bible : first, its total context — its context in the total testimony of the Bible ; second, its immediate context — who said it, when he said it, and why ; third, the context in which you yourself and the group are. The Bible is addressed to you, and therefore your context is part of the biblical context.

If we take the Bible as a whole, we find that it is concerned with one movement. You open the Bible and it begins with the story of God's creation. You come to the last chapter, and you find there the picture of creation when it is over. God is acting from the first chapter of Genesis through the last chapter of Revelation. This one movement is the context within which every passage of the Bible is set. It contains two themes, the world and the Church. The object of God's action is the world, not the Church. The Church is something that God brings into being for the sake of the world. Very often we get into difficulties, because the Church, or Christian people, are not interested in the world. They want to have a dialogue about themselves with God, and nothing happens, because whenever God talks, He does not talk about the Church, He talks about the world. Theology is useless when it becomes a monologue within the Church ; when it becomes a dialogue about the world, it begins to have meaning. The Bible is concerned about the world, and we have to keep our concern for the world.

That is one relationship between the Church and the world. The other is this : that this world, which God is concerned about, is a world in opposition to God, a world which refuses to accept what God does for it, and the Church is a pilgrim people in the world. You remember the story of Abraham, and that phrase which says, "Abraham was a pilgrim in the land of promise." The Church has to learn that kind of existence : how to be a pilgrim in the land of promise.

Third, the personal context : the context in which we stand, to which the Bible speaks. I can give you just one illustration. I had a friend whose son was ill. I went to see her, and talked to her, and prayed with the child. As I was leaving, the mother said to me, "He is rather ill, but I'm not very worried. I'm never worried when this boy is ill. I am worried when my other boy is ill." I said, "Why ?", and the mother said to me, "You know, some years ago, this boy of mine was very ill and the doctor came and said, 'He'll be dead within the next hour or so', and I was so upset by it that I went to the next room and sat there alone, weeping, because I just couldn't bear to go and stand by the bedside of my son who was dying. While I was there the word of God to Abraham suddenly came to my mind, 'Take your son Isaac and sacrifice him to me'. Without realizing what I was doing, I said, 'I will'. I felt ready and able to go back to my son's room and stand by the bedside and watch him die. But he didn't die. He got well. Now, whenever he falls ill, I am not very worried, because he belongs to God in a special way. I gave him." You can study the story of Abraham and Isaac, but there is a personal context for that story. You can argue as much as you like about whether God did tell Abraham this, or whether He could have told Abraham that, but all that argument is on one plane. One of the things we know is that, as we progress in the Christian life, passage after passage in the Bible slowly begin to take on a personal context. And after that, when we read that particular passage, it is not its total context or its immediate context that is determinative for us, but the personal context in which that particular passage is set.

Let us look at another illustration to clarify again what we have been saying : the story of David and Goliath. In passing, let me simply point out : never use Bible stories for moralizing purposes. I still remember, as a child, learning the story of David and Goliath in Sunday School. The teacher said : "David was a small boy, who loved God and believed in Him. Goliath was a huge giant who threatened the armies of God, and David went and did this, and Goliath died. Now, boys and girls, go home and be like David." If you did go home and were like David, you were a horror, for David was a very unsav-

oury character. That kind of moralizing is completely wrong. God, not David, should be the hero.

Now, let us go back to the story of David and Goliath. The first thing that you notice is the contest between the Philistines and Israel. It is one of the things you find throughout the Old Testament, where the Church, the People of God, is always set over against the world. You start with Abraham over against the Canaanites. Then you come to Moses and Pharaoh. Then you have the period of the entrance into Canaan, and in the time of Joshua you have the Moabites, Ammonites and Amorites. Next there is the period of Solomon, and then the divided Kingdom, and you have either Egypt or Assyria or Syria or Babylon. Then you have Greece and Rome, and the normal historical development of the various empires. There is always that Church-world theme in the Bible, and in the David and Goliath story it is in terms of the Philistines and Israel.

Then you have the second theme, the immediate context : God's question and God's answer. The question is, what is Saul going to do ? And God's answer is, "There is little David." But Saul has a completely different answer : Saul's answer is a long suit of armour, into which whoever is to deliver them must fit. And they try to fit various people inside this armour, and nothing happens. David is brought, and is fitted inside this armour, and still nothing happens, until God's answer is allowed to stand by itself. Now we know that kind of thing, those of us who are in the churches, with rules and regulations about the kind of people we want to join the ministry. They have to fit this suit of armour. Then God sends someone and he just does not fit, and the church has to meet in solemn assembly and decide either to get rid of the armour or to get rid of the man. Very often we get rid of the man. And then, of course, there is the personal context, and as far as it is concerned, you yourself may be in the position of either David, or Saul, or Goliath. It depends on where you yourself stand.

### *The literary nature of the passage*

The third thing that is necessary in preparing Bible study is to ask, "What is the literary nature of this writing ?" Unless you take it seriously, you may keep asking the wrong questions. For instance, take the first chapter of Genesis. It is perfectly obvious that it is a poem about creation. It has a verse and a chorus. The chorus is always, "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day", and so on. Now someone looks at this and says, "Did it hap-

pen ?", and "Did God make the world like this ?" My mind immediately goes to another poem addressed to the daffodils, or to Shelley's poem to the skylark. Someone reads the poem, and this wonderful conversation the poet had with a skylark, and says, "Did it happen ?" And the answer is, "Of course it did." "Oh yes, but in what language did the skylark talk ?" You see, it's the wrong kind of question to ask about poetry.

It is very important that the questions you ask about a biblical passage be relevant to the literary method employed. And we must never think that there is only one kind of truth, historical truth. The Bible deals with different kinds of happenings, and it is very important to ask whether we are dealing with an allegory, a drama, a legend, a myth, or with apocalypse.

As far as possible, try to keep in mind the critical apparatus that may be necessary for that particular passage. Again, the simplest way of illustrating this is to take a few examples : take Corinthians where Paul is talking about the resurrection. That chapter will make no sense if you fail to remember that the Jews did not make the distinction between body and soul which we make. We are very often Greeks, not Hebrews. We think about the body and the soul inside the body. Thus this chapter of Corinthians makes no sense whatever, because what is the use of talking about the resurrection when what you believe in is immortality. In other words, you have to know a little Hebrew psychology to understand this chapter. That is a part of the critical apparatus that is necessary. To take another : suppose that we are studying Deuteronomy. It is very important to ask who wrote this book. It makes a world of difference whether you say Moses wrote it or that it was the book which was discovered during the reign of King Josiah. This is a critical question that you have to ask and answer. Or take the book of Ruth : it is very important to find out when this book was written — at the time of the Judges, or at the time of Ezra as a protest against the marriage laws that Ezra proclaimed. Sometimes the date is important ; sometimes the author ; sometimes it is the psychology, the thought-form ; and all this is part of the critical apparatus that is necessary for the study of the Bible.

### *Technics*

The last thing to prepare in Bible study is technics, because you have to deal with a group. There are an endless number of technics, but I think that there are three things which are important no matter what technic you employ.



First, the leader must make clear in his own mind how he is going to get full participation, to make everyone talk. It depends on your group. If you have a Federation group, very often you can get everyone to talk by simply asking, "Have you anything to say?" Sometimes you run into a situation where no one is willing to talk. A very simple method is to say something so atrocious that they will all protest. You must consciously devise two or three alternative methods for getting full participation. It is not good enough for just two or three persons to talk and the rest to keep quiet.

Second, you must know how to avoid a purely technical discussion, unless it is a group of theologians who enjoy that kind. If there are two or three theologians, you must learn how to shut them up. Be sufficiently technical to bring the critical apparatus out into the open, and then forget about it and get on with Bible study. The important thing about Bible study is this : your technical discussion will not produce your testimony to Jesus Christ, will not evoke faith, will not lead to obedience. And, therefore, technical discussion is not enough.

Third, keep the Bible study open to the very end. Never let it get to the point where what you have discovered can be put inside a proposition, where all the loose ends are nicely tied up. In other words, never use Bible study to formulate dogma or doctrine ; that is already done for you in the Church. That is not what Bible study is for. You must keep the Bible study open to the very end, so that when the people go away, each one has a little something tickling inside, which won't rest. Then they will find their own answers, because they must believe, they must obey.

## **The Gods on the Campus**

### **A Mutual Confession**

JOHN GARRETT

Eleven at night is the hour when miners and riveters, postmen and farmers turn off the television and go to bed. Students live under the sign of the owl. They are attentive and vocal when quiet comes over the rest of the human city. At midnight the lights burn brightest in colleges and lodgings. When they have left these night retreats, where they first learned to drink black coffee and think with the writers of their books that are spread out on their desks

in the lamplight, those who were once students still seek each other out. It may be in the rear seats of dimmed aircraft, or round the corner tables in half-deserted cafes. At one such table, in a city I can no longer remember without seeing their faces, I heard some talking once, not long ago. They fingered their drinks, relaxing their acquired official postures for an hour. It had been a long day in the closing stages of yet another consultation of experts. Like ashamed members of a revolutionary party about to change its line they confessed that they had gone together after false gods.

In the alcove a senior lecturer from a Far Eastern college was talking. His almond eyes looked out of his almond face at his almond coloured hands. "I think we all modelled ourselves in those days on the dons who kept collections of butterflies and pipes — or at least those of us who were ambitious and wanted to have quiet ties, quiet suits and quiet voices. Gradually we consolidated our rows of books. We wrote the dates of commencing and ending each book very neatly on the fly-leaves. Graduation brought us research fellowships and limited lecturing assignments. We were aware of the imprisonment of some of our contemporaries, but felt that by avoiding immediate over-immersion in political action we were achieving a certain balance and detachment. This was part of our deeper heritage. It would be of service later to our nations. The noises of the beggars at the railway stations preyed on us; at the same time we were convinced that our academic vocation would help us to alleviate what lay behind it. We have become professors. Our published works have been well noted. We are still telling ourselves that the achievement of our legitimate ambition is not in conflict with the welfare of our people. But often I wonder whether in choosing the dear goddess of learning, whose shrine we graced with flowers before the examinations as a matter of form, we were not after all worshipping ourselves and taking flight out of the villages. Somewhere in me there is a physical trembling when I think of the illiteracy of my grandmother and the way my father used to finger the facial growth that killed him. Now that I listen to Brahms on my radiogram before I go to bed at night, the sound of the flute playing in microtones in a village that lies down by the rail-tracks, half a mile from the faculty's compound, comes into my open window as a discord. I am not yet Western. My own people are lost to me because of the path I have chosen. Yet I am a success."

An aeronautical engineer lifted his crew-cut head from staring into his glass. "Aren't you talking a little like the Third Programme?" he said, in an accent that made it difficult to know whether he was

originally from the Middle West or New England. "I guess in my time we were most of us not greatly interested in making out academically. There was a kind of fascination in knowing that Hutchens had put a cyclotron in the centre of the football field. What was the difference for us in watching the way three fast tackles cleared the way for the quarter-back to move, and the fact that the guys who were watching the behaviour of several neutrons could predict the release of quite a packet of new energy? It was kind of intriguing to think that pure science and the applications were falling in love and getting married in a new way. To us the poetry bookshops all you fellows were running were just so many psychiatric consulting rooms. Not that we believed in progress. We just believed in what we were doing. We were even impatient with the crowd that kept on harping on 'the scientific method'. You still can't call us irresponsible scientists. We're just worried, that's all. We didn't kid ourselves that what we were finding out was going to rebuild the world. We just happened to be genuinely interested in what we were doing. And now? Where the hell are we going? I don't know. I blame myself."

"Probably our predicament is not so dissimilar." This time it was a Frenchman — philologist, sociologist, linguist. He turned his lapel as he talked. He had just returned from Africa with a striking collection of tape recordings. "What happened to your world when the atom began to shimmer and dissolve has happened to mine. We thought that words could be neat and precise in spite of the radio and the advertising agencies. I still think so. But we were worshippers of the word; not exactly rationalists, but precisionists. We thought we could engineer a fortress where the succinct and subtle people would gradually establish at least a provisional control over language. What we were after, probably, was the re-establishment of the community that had been cemented by the use of Latin in the Middle Ages. And here we are. The half-formed incantations of animists reverberate in our numbed brains when we try to turn over for sleep. Thousands of confused waves are beating on the shore of the European civilization we had taken for granted as normative and definitive. Our musical scales are being smashed again before our eyes. Did you see again the other day the surrealist film with the bizarre head of an ass, falling out of nowhere on to the keyboard of a pianoforte? Literature, by which I mean human letters, literature in any universal sense, seems an impossibility. It has become the refuge of people who put cottonwool in their ears to stifle the thud of the drums. All our words have gone into solution like your atoms. What on earth can come out of this for me in my

lifetime ? And in any case, will there be an earth if and when words can again shape a sentence ? Will the Amazonian Indian hold discourse with his fellow-savage who reads *Film Illustrated* and *Sports Pix* as he travels on the metro or the subway ?”

A woman who had directed several films sat opposite him. She flicked her pendant and held up a white palm and five spread fingers. It was done in obvious imitation of Jean Cocteau. She was pretty. They all turned towards her without any sense of strain. She was then ready to begin. “I have worshipped this hand for some years”, she said. “It has put paint on numbers of delectable sets. It enjoys turning pigment into jewels. It has caressed a good cello. It has often waved disparagingly at painting I have considered photographic, and approvingly at photographs I have considered symbolic. It has been held in the pale light of lamps, ingeniously placed, in studios, or to augment thin sunlight. It has occasionally been put against my other hand in the gesture of prayer, but chiefly because prayer has seemed to me a peculiarly orderly and rhythmic activity of human beings at their most elegant and self-forgetful best. Somewhere or other I read that Leon Bloy, who was a Roman Catholic, called the arts the glittering scales on the tail of the Old Serpent. How I love the arts, as he did. And how right he was about them. Of course I admit I feel in this mood when I’m tired. I shall disagree with Bloy in the morning.”

They all laughed. They had liked what she had said. They thought they understood. So did she.

“You have given me an idea for a novel”, said a young German writer who looked as though he worked on the docks. “You will be its chief character, and under your own Christian name. You will be the personification of all the things I worship myself in protest against my family and the recent history of my nation. It will be a book about liberty. The writing of it will be a reaction against the thought that my life is determined by cruel cause and effect. My liberty will be pleasure (it has been a pleasure to look at you and hear you talk just now) — and I cannot pretend that the liberty I’m after has nothing to do with sex. In a way I expect it is true that I resent law ; therefore I think I shall impose my own order on what I write. It will be a little like André Gide, but not too much like Thomas Mann. God will be in the book. I shall give the whole idea of God a new lease on life by clothing it with the kind of liberty I shall describe. But I wonder whether the thing might not degenerate after all, in this way, into a book about myself ? Oh, good God, I expect it will. No. Perhaps I shouldn’t write it after all.”



One of the group dropped an olive stone into his empty glass. "I expect you all know that I'm working for my government now?" he asked, looking ashamed.

"Aren't we all?" they said, looking at him with pity.

"But I love the university, you know", he continued. "It's still my world. I still hope I may land a teaching job when this is over."

"Don't we all?" they said.

"The university gave me a crib to be nurtured in", he said softly, but aloud. "Now I think of its upper storeys as a kind of palace. I'd like to go back."

"Wouldn't we all?" they said.

"Do you think I worship the idea of the university?" he asked them.

"Maybe you do", they said.

"But when you get there you find it's not really a university any more", muttered a philosopher of sorts, who was sitting next to him.

"Do you really think not?" somebody asked. They were all silent.

I suspected that somebody religious might be with them. He was. The silence gave him his opportunity. "I know whom I have believed", he said, with the utmost brightness, and went on, "and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Everybody was acutely embarrassed. They all liked him and felt sorry for him. He was so intense. "This book is God's Word", he said, bringing out his pocket Testament. "When I am tempted it helps me; when I doubt I find my answer here. I have the assurance that heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word will not pass away."

"What happens to everyone else except you when heaven and earth pass away?" somebody asked him. He put his book back in his pocket. The silence returned.

It was broken almost at once by the sound of a juke box at the other end of the cafe. What filled the place was not music, but a voice. Nobody moved. Everyone listened. The voice spoke, quietly. "Does not wisdom cry", it said, "and understanding put forth her voice? In the top of high places by the way, where the paths meet, she stands; beside the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors, she cries aloud: Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. We speak wisdom among those who are mature: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nothing. But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that has been hidden, which God

destined before the worlds to be man's glory, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. I beat upon your doors. Open to me. I am here."

The voice stopped. The waiter closed the last windows. He came to them slowly to settle the account. They turned their faces towards him and began to take their coats from the pegs. The waiter looked at them. "It has been good to have you here", he said to them. They looked astonished. "I know I am wearing this white apron", he said, "but I'm also the proprietor. Come again." They smiled at him. He seemed so much one of them. He put his hand on the white tablecloth where he so often placed the bread and wine. Somebody had hurt him. The hand was pierced.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

**CHURCH AND SOCIETY : CATHOLIC SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT AND MOVEMENTS (1789-1950)**, edited by Joseph N. Moody. Published by Arts Inc., New York, 1953. 914 pages. \$12.00.

This book is a collection of essays on Catholic social thinking and action in different countries from the French Revolution until 1950. Since there is so little good material available in English on this subject, it fills a previous gap, all the more so because it has been done so well. This is not a defensively apologetic work of interest primarily to those already convinced of the merits of Catholic social teaching. Nor is it an academic exercise in the development of Catholic moral theology. It is a profoundly searching book, objective and self-critical in being ready to face the most unpleasant facts, and creative in its search for better answers than those discovered by the Catholic Church in the past. Readers should not be deterred either by its length (900 pages), or its price (\$12), or its dedication (to Cardinal Spellman). Anyone concerned with the witness of the Church in modern society will greatly benefit from a careful reading of this remarkable and extremely interesting collection of essays.

The bold and imaginative approach of the book is evident from the questions with which the different writers approach their subject. In his introduction, the editor outlines the questions which he hopes the book will help to answer and a few may be quoted here to indicate the incisiveness of the approach: "Has Catholicism a preconceived doctrinal attitude that prevented it from accepting liberalism and democracy, as the anti-clerical thesis of Quinet and Michelet contends?" "To what extent have social forces influenced the position of Catholics, and dialectically in what respect have these positions reacted on the social conditions?" "Is the Church necessarily conservative because of its institutional character — institutional in the broad sense, not merely including property and economic interests but also its religious interest in saving souls? Does this ecclesiastical aspect of the Church incline it to resist change?"

It cannot be said that the writers of the different essays succeed equally well in giving us insights into, or answers to, these questions. Viewed from this standpoint, the best essay in the book (and the long-

est) is that by Edgar Alexander, writing on "Social and Political Movements and Ideas in German and Austrian Catholicism (1789-1950)". It would, however, be too much to expect all the essays to be as informative and interesting as his. There must be few scholars in any church who have the personal experience, and who have studied a movement so carefully, as to be able to write such a thorough and frank account of the situation of their church in relation to social trends and movements. Mr. Alexander's style of writing also sets him apart. It is not an easy style, but the author has strong convictions about the causes of his church's weaknesses and failures in social action in Germany, and in making judgments his essay frequently excels in a polemical style which only adds to its fascination.

An essay on "Catholicism and Society in France" by Professor Moody is also very instructive, though it has inevitably the ring of having been written by an outsider (even if an extremely well-informed one). Two French Catholics contribute supplementary essays on the contemporary situation in an attempt to remedy this defect, but this strategy is not entirely successful.

Many of the writers are so preoccupied with the developments up to the second world war that post-war developments are hardly mentioned. And a few of the essays are too brief or too general to accomplish their purpose. This is true particularly of the essay by Christopher Hollis on "The Social Evolution in Modern English Catholicism".

But the problem which confronted the editor must be kept in mind in making a final judgment : how to find writers who could contribute to a book which sought to probe into so many different national situations where Catholic social action has been felt. It is to his credit that he succeeds so often in achieving his purpose.

What conclusions about the problems of Roman Catholic social thought can be drawn from these essays ? There is space here to deal with only a few of the many points which strike the reader. One interesting fact which emerges is that the papal social encyclicals have not played the role in Catholic social teaching which many Catholic apologists would have us believe. The reasons for this are varied : the intent of the encyclicals is not always clear ; they are so general or abstract in phrasing that when applied to specific problems by groups, even in the same country, quite different action results ; they are often based on conceptions of a social movement, such as communism or socialism, which are too inflexible to deal with the varied forms which these movements have taken in different countries at different times ; in their language and spirit the encyclicals are frequently limited by historically or sociologically conditioned social



categories which actually weaken rather than strengthen the Christian social conscience. Whatever the reason, the fact seems to be that the social encyclicals have not performed very well their function of developing a clear or common Christian social witness among Catholics. Professor Moody's description of the collapse of the Christian Democratic movement in France in the late nineteenth century reveals some of the problems very clearly :

Beginning as a spontaneous movement in various parts of France and led by vigorous personalities who differed in methods, Christian Democracy never achieved an effective national organization. Nor did it elaborate an adequate program. The seeds of a positive doctrine were to be found in the papal encyclicals, but it would have taken time and study to translate these generalities into a concrete body of proposals capable of attracting mass support. (Moreover) the basic cause of its disintegration was the anti-Semitism of most of its leaders. Fundamentally it was the Dreyfus Affair which destroyed the Christian Democracy of the 90's.

The bitter internal division of Roman Catholics on most social and political questions as revealed in these essays is also very striking. Indeed, to those accustomed to regard the Catholic Church as a monolithic force insisting on a strong common line in political and social affairs, the internal tensions will be especially illuminating. Catholic conservatives against Catholic workers, Catholic monarchists against Catholic republicans, hierarchy against laity, and lay-minded hierarchy against hierarchy-minded laity in nearly all countries, and all interpreting the encyclicals to satisfy their particular class or social interest : this is the picture which emerges very frequently in these pages. In view of these tensions and the inability to resolve them, the authors recognize the great responsibility which has to be borne by the Church itself for the confused moral and spiritual situation in the present world, for the separation of the working classes from the Church, for the rise of all kinds of atheistic and anti-Christian movements, and for the public scepticism due to the silencing of those prophetic spirits who were too troublesome to the church authorities. It is to the great credit of the writers in this book and to the Catholic faith which inspires them that they have been so fearless in presenting the case against their Church. Their candid picture must draw Protestants very close to such Catholic brethren, for we also know the feeling of shame and even betrayal which comes from an honest look at the misery, as well as the greatness, of the Church. We as Protestants may only wish that we shall be able to examine our own shortcomings and sins as boldly as have these Catholic writers.

Mr. Alexander in his essay argues that the weaknesses of the Catholic Church in the field of social and political thought and action are due to the tendency to hold to "the theological integralism of a long bygone medieval ecclesiastical organization of society" in opposition to "the theological realism of social and political Catholicism which offers autonomous liberties to the Church and State in a modern social order". He argues very strongly that the weakness of the Church in social matters must be ascribed to those elements within it (he refers especially to "rigidly Thomistic Dominicanism") which stressed authority, passivity and hierarchy. There is, he believes, in the teaching of Molina and Suarez, "the true originators of the Jesuit Order's social metaphysics", an accent on democracy, personalism and realism which is the specific basis of the best German social Catholicism, especially as it developed in the Rhineland. Whether Alexander is right in putting all the blame on "Dominican integralism" may perhaps be argued, but his development of the proposition that "it is inadmissible from a scientific point of view to mix up basic principles of theology... with the purely sociological categories of the orders and details of social and economic life in their temporal causations" is a very interesting point also for contemporary Protestant thinking about the theological basis of social and political thought. For him this is the key to the integrity and relevance of the Church in thinking and acting on the problems of society.

But what hope is there that the personalistic, democratic, realistic school of Catholic thought will predominate in the Roman Church? What hope is there that the Roman Church today will really be faithful to "its traditional concern to avoid identification with a particular socio-political system"? To these questions there is no clear answer, and we are perhaps presumptuous to expect one. But is there any indication that in the post-war developments those groups in the Catholic Church which are seeking to break down the barriers between the Christian and the non-Christian, whether in politics or in social and economic affairs, are securing the support of the clergy and the hierarchy? The trend of the MRP in France and the fate of the Christian Democratic Party groups in Germany and Italy do not give us much grounds for hope. Today the MRP is forced by confessional concerns to spend its time wastefully and divisively arguing the school question on old narrow lines and reviving old tensions with Socialists and Radicals, while major issues of social and economic policy are neglected. The Catholic parties of Italy and Germany are subjected to strong clerical influence, and clerical empire-building is once again on the increase. But perhaps our fears will be proved groundless and perhaps there are enough Catholics of the order of

these essayists to dispel our doubts. At least we can be thankful that there is this extraordinarily vital group within the Roman Church who can help us in examining our own witness, and also bring to us the contribution of their own Church in terms which can enable us to identify ourselves with them in their struggle.

PAUL ABRECHT.

A NEW TESTAMENT WORDBOOK, by William Barclay. SCM Press, London. 128 pages. 7/6.

Words, and especially biblical terms, no longer communicate to us what they originally did and what they were intended to communicate. William Barclay, Professor of New Testament at Trinity College of the University of Glasgow, helps us in this difficulty. He leads us back to the Greek sense of certain great New Testament words and tries to show us "what these words meant to the writers of the New Testament and to those who read and heard their message for the first time". The author succeeds: old abused terms are given back their original flavour; they become again symbols which convey the reality of daily human life and strife. This metamorphosis is due to the concrete examples of the use of these New Testament terms in classical Greek, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament and in the Hellenistic Greek. It is very especially due to the many examples of the use of these terms in the *papyri*, which are like open windows on the daily life of New Testament times, and on the Greek language as the ordinary, non-literary person then spoke it.

The book makes no pretension to be all-inclusive: too many New Testament key-words like love, grace, time, world, and so forth are not dealt with. Nor is there any theological discussion of the terms. But this incompleteness is the special merit of the book: (i) It allows the author to give space to less known biblical terms, which occur only once, or very infrequently, in the New Testament, and which still open up quite new horizons in the New Testament message. (ii) It allows the reader to do his own thinking: the author clears the way and gives us the goals; one or two short phrases are added to indicate the direction for our meditation; the author then leaves us to enjoy by ourselves the thrill of discovering new depths of truth in our old and ever-new Bible.

The author has much imagination. His choice of New Testament terms, his illustrations, which are chosen not without humour, and especially his tentative translations or paraphrases of the Greek terms prove it. What a pity, therefore, that he could not find a more

imaginative title for his book ! I hope that I have made it clear that it is not just another dry and dull "wordbook", but rather a *variété* with many short, illuminating sketches around each word.

BIBLE STUDY EXERCISES, by C. M. Jones. SCM Press, London. 72 pages. 4/-.

Neither the title nor the appearance of this book awakes pleasant remembrances of our former school days (you know : "French Grammar Exercises", etc.). Well, it *is* a school book, and besides three short introductory chapters and the "Additional Notes" at the end, you will find 46 pages of questions and tasks. The author, a lecturer in religious education (University of Leeds, Institute of Education), is a good teacher; he asks many excellent questions and gives tasks which engage both our intellect and imagination in an exciting "Bible research".

Those who would like to initiate serious Bible study in schools or camps will find this book a very valuable tool. Through the right use of this tool it should be easy to avoid both monological and abstract intellectualistic teaching. The class or Bible study group will soon be transformed into a research team, which discovers together God's design from the creation until — alas, not until the new creation. Why did the author stop short after the New Testament Letters, without closing with a chapter on Revelation ? We very much hope that in a second edition the author will finish his book !

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST. A STUDY IN HIS SELF-PORTRAITURE, by Hugh Martin. SCM Press, London. 114 pp. 7s.

"The centre of gravity of the New Testament is always to be discovered in the person of Jesus Christ Himself, in beliefs about Him and relationships to Him." This is not a new thesis. We have read it so often in the books of present-day scholars in systematic and biblical theology that we are no longer startled by it.

The author first develops this thesis in an apologetic way. This first part is too short to give a real confrontation of divergent views, and too long to serve as an introduction to the second and main part of the study. This latter part gives many proofs and illustrations of the thesis by analysing the claims Christ made according to the witness of the synoptic Gospels. Again and again we are challenged by the old dilemma : either those claims are true and Christ was God, or the claims are false and, if so, they destroy the greatness and reliability of the whole teaching of Jesus ; in that case Jesus could only be insane, a megalomaniac !



The constant challenge may help to startle us again by the well-known thesis of the book, and help us to ask ourselves and others the most decisive question ever asked: "Whom do you say that I am?"

HANS-RUEDI WEBER.

## FACULTY PAPERS

The plan for the publication of *Faculty Papers* originated three years ago, when the Chairman of Faculty Work in the Episcopal Church had made a wide survey of university and college life throughout the United States, to discover the best way of stimulating a growing interest in Christianity all over the country. The aim of these attractively-produced 25-page booklets is to apply Christian insights to current academic issues and thus to relate the different disciplines concerned to the Christian faith. The first eleven have already appeared and may be obtained (one dollar for a series of six individual papers 25 cents each) from the Secretary, the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Church Missions House, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York 10.

*Natural Law and Human Nature* is an attempt to examine the theological sanctions of positive law, especially in the spheres of criminal law and economic organization. According to Wilber G. Katz, the problems of positive law are inextricably intertwined with the basic problem of human responsibility, which can only be understood in terms of the Christian doctrine of man. In criticizing William Temple's use of natural law to support a theory of economic socialism, he claims that such a system would not necessarily be more equitable and efficient than one based on profit-seeking enterprise in which wages are largely determined by the forces of competitive markets. Henry L. Shepherd's short comment deals mainly with the inadequacy of positive law as a basis for any ethical system, and John Wild's is a fascinating outline of the development of the whole concept of natural law in Eastern and Western thought, from Plato and Aristotle, through St. Paul, St. Augustine and St. Thomas, to the recent United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

*The Cosmic Drama*, by William G. Pollard, is a speculative account of the chemical and biological changes whereby a vast cloud of created neutrons has developed, over a period of four or five billion (that is, thousand million) years, into the ordered and expanding universe we know today. Written against a cosmic background and

from a physicist's point of view, this exciting and vertiginous story — which moves at bewildering speed from primordial clouds of nuclei at a billion degrees centigrade to the formation of galaxies, and then to "the age of cockroaches", and the giant mastodon, and the first appearance of man on earth — will remind many readers of Fred Hoyle's *The Nature of the Universe*. While the author offers here no solution of our theological problems, he makes bold and imaginative use of recent advances in physics in a way which will intrigue all who believe that Creation involves a divine Process as well as a divine Act.

*Revelation and Response*, by the same author (formerly a professor of physics and now a priest of the Church as well as a practising scientist), opens with an account of the slow emergence of human civilization and primitive religion after the first appearance of *homo sapiens* on earth thirty thousand years ago. The main part of this paper is a condensed and detailed summary of the history of Israel, beginning at the Exodus and ending at Pentecost and the expansion of the early Church. The emphasis is historical rather than theological throughout. We are told much more about the occasions of revelation than about its nature and content. But we have here a useful outline of the Old Testament story, and are left in no doubt about the stark and turbulent historicity of the process whereby the divine revelation came to man and found its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

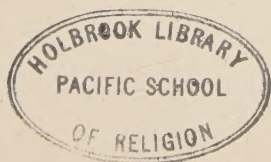
In the two papers, *History and Christianity* (I, *The Problem* and II, *The Answer*) Brooks Otis asks, what light does history shed on the truth of Christianity? Is there any such thing as an historical proof of Christianity? In facing this question — to which he replies with a confident and unequivocal yes — the author examines the part played by religion in the rise and fall of several ancient civilizations, then focuses on the Judaeo-Christian faith to delineate its distinctive contribution to the life of mankind. How are we to account for the vast depth and range of the impact of Christianity, and especially for the "incredibly dynamic" nature of Christian civilization? The author discusses this in terms of the Christian attitude to nature, to the community, and to history. The main characteristic of post-Incarnation history is the opportunity for "extension of freedom to perfect or pervert the law of love", which finds its fullest expression in the "dynamic character" of Western civilization. This kaleidoscopic study will undoubtedly evoke discussion (and some protest), especially among those who are unable to connect Western activism so closely with Christian progress. It will not convince everyone that the verdict of history is as unambiguous as the author affirms, but it will certainly lead some who have too readily accepted the opinions

of H. A. L. Fisher or Herbert Butterfield or Arnold Toynbee to re-examine their presuppositions. Appended to the second of these papers is an essay by Malcolm Ross on *The Writer as Christian*, which deals with the so-called "revival in Christian literature" and the general relationship between religions and the arts. The author considers some of the main criteria of any specifically Christian attitude to art and illustrates his thesis with a short appraisal of T. S. Eliot.

*Psychological Understanding of Religious Experience (with special reference to Conscience)* is a psychiatrist's approach to an important but relatively unfamiliar part of the frontier between science and religion. Stanley A. Leavy has been impressed by the sceptical attitude adopted by many ministers of religion towards the findings of psychologists, and is very reluctant to encroach into theological ground. As an experienced practising psychologist, he is convinced, however, that the solution of some personal problems requires scientific knowledge as well as pastoral care, and he says some illuminating things here about "the resident policeman" (to use J. B. Phillip's phrase) which ministers, and others will do well to ponder.

*Fanfare for Augustine* contains two historical essays by Richard Hocking. The first, *Crises of a World and an Individual* describes the conversion and career of St. Augustine and relates his personal experience to his interpretation of contemporary events. The second, *Right Pessimism and Right Optimism*, which raises similar issues in a modern context, is partly a philosophy of history and partly a discussion of the problem of evil, in which the Augustinian view, with its incessant emphasis on "the evil will" is contrasted with the irresponsibility and "excuse-finding habits" of the modern man.

"Are there any Christian reasons for being an Anglican? Is *The Book of Common Prayer* a crucial document of the Christian religion?" These are the opening sentences of *The Tudor Compromise* by T. S. K. Scott-Craig. The answer to these tendentious but very relevant questions is offered in literary and historical terms which glide smoothly over the theological issues which for most of us are so vital and inescapable. The author speaks engagingly, if somewhat incoherently, about the English history of the sixteenth century, about the liturgical significance of the 1549 Prayer Book, and about the subsequent emergence of the "compromise" between Catholic religion and Protestant culture — "a golden and exciting mean which gave hope of a real Christendom to come". He then turns to the literary influence of *The Book of Common Prayer* — upon Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton, for example — and "the amazing recrudescence of Christian literature" during the last few decades. Appended to





this paper is a short essay by Powel Mills Dawley, *The Work of Whitgift*.

*Cycles and Turning Points* is the title of a suggestive essay on the broken pattern of our normal individual and corporate life. Everett C. Hughes is at pains to point out — what we already know but too easily forget — that life is never an undisturbed and uninterrupted journey. We are constantly being confronted by crises, or turning-points, of one sort or another, which are — or used to be — given social recognition in rites and ceremonies of various kinds. The rites may sometimes degenerate into empty superstitious or purely formal conventions; but more often they serve a useful purpose, in helping people to overcome their “crises” and by continually reminding them of the contingent and highly unpredictable nature of the ordinary human life-cycle. Although these ideas are not discussed in a specifically Christian context, they are clearly relevant to our understanding of the ordinances of baptism, confirmation and the Christian year. This paper is followed by *A Seventeenth Century Conversation* by Charles M. Coffin, a short essay on the interpretation of some poems of Herbert and Milton, with special reference to the imagery of the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer*.

*The Communist Credo and the Christian Creed* also contains two papers. The first, *Communism and Christianity*, by John H. Hallowell, explains the fundamental principles of communism, and examines the similarities and differences between these and the main affirmations of the Christian faith. So much might be said to commend this paper that criticism seems out of place. But the general tendency, revealed here, to regard communism and Christianity as rival and almost incompatible ideologies, is hard to justify and may receive censure from some quarters. Many Christians, however, who will not altogether share the author's attitude towards communism, will value his judicious and lucid exposition of the communist case. The second paper, *Christian Regionalism*, by Reginald D. Lang, is a more specialized essay dealing with the “inherent dualism between regionalism and universalism” in modern politics, and ways in which universal ideals of peace may be incorporated into political structures less than universal in scope. The author approaches the subject from a strictly theoretical point of view and illustrates his thesis with references to the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty and Central African Federation.

*Scientific Language and Religious Faith*, by G. Evelyn Hutchinson, is an exploration of the relationship between “the two systems of thought and behaviour that we call respectively science and reli-



gion". The author is deeply conscious of the dichotomy — not so much between the two fields of experience as between our statements concerning them. Most of our difficulties here, he feels, arise from our failure to realize that, in the propositional system of science we are making statements in a language that is quite different from the language of the propositional system of theology. This leads on to a discussion of three possible language systems, and the relation between them. The value of this paper is limited somewhat by inadequate consideration of the analogical use of words (in all fields), and by the unstated presupposition that science and religion are almost identifiable with systems of thought which are best expressed in propositional form. But it offers a useful and provocative contribution to the wider discussion of the nature of truth, and one which will be especially appreciated by scientists who find difficulty in interpreting theological statements.

*Human Reason : Its Genesis and Goal*, by John B. Hyde, is a tantalizingly short essay on the physiological basis of mind and the nature of human destiny. On the one hand, "The seat of human reason is the brain ; about three pints of living tissue having the consistency of custard pudding" ; on the other, "Society, art, and science, as well as religious observances, may be seen as a form of communion between God and man."

SHOCK AND RENEWAL, compiled by Keith R. Bridston. Published by Friendship Press for the Student Volunteer Movement, New York. 64 pp. paper. 60 cents.

REVOLUTION AND REDEMPTION, by M. M. Thomas and Paul E. Converse. Friendship Press, New York. 64 pp. paper. 60 cents.

ENCOUNTER WITH REVOLUTION, by M. Richard Shaull. A Haddam House Book, Association Press, New York, 1955. 145 pp. paper edition available only to students from SVM \$1.25. Regular cloth edition \$2.50.

These three short books are the study material chosen to be used before and after the Ecumenical Student Conference on the Christian World Mission held at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, from December 27 - January 1, 1956, under the joint sponsorship of the Student Volunteer Movement and the WSCF.

This reviewer is in no position to know if the unprecedented number of students who gathered there was due to advance reading of these booklets, but it may well have been. One rejoices at the idea that the stimulating challenges presented in this material were

the year-end and January first preoccupations of a whole generation of representative North American students.

According to reports that have reached us, over 3,000 students assembled at Athens, Ohio, over one-third of them foreign students. The organizers chose, nevertheless, material expressly written for North Americans, perhaps too exclusively so. Americans should not get the impression that they are so important that all that is wrong is due to *their* sins alone, and that, consequently, it will suffice for Americans to correct their ways — as they are urgently called upon to do — in order that all be well.

It is not this reviewer's intention to give such a clear outline of the contents of these booklets that the reader could dispense with their acquisition. On the contrary, he believes that it would be very wholesome if these booklets could be read by student leaders around the world. This would serve a dual purpose: students around the world would know that "the Americans have been told", and American students would be challenged even more by the realization that students around the world are now waiting to see "what they are going to do about it".

*Shock and Renewal* contains excerpts from six recent books followed by questions. One non-Anglo-Saxon is present: Jacques Ellul, unfortunately perhaps not the easiest one to understand.

*Revolution and Redemption* is the result of a very smooth collaboration of an American and an Asian (by air-mail, we are told). It is extremely helpful in setting the present "Revolutionary Upheaval" (chap. 1) in line with "American Society and the World Revolution" (chap. 2). Chapter 3 is a challenge to the mission of the Church which no student of '55-'56 can read and then lament that there is nothing left to do. Should he tend to sigh, "Who can do this task?", there is a wholesome theological emphasis upon the fact that the Church is not primarily man's work.

Richard Shaull writes with the earnestness and conviction born from years spent in Brazil as an American, aware of that double allegiance to a people one wants to serve and the country of which one is a citizen. Such a double allegiance becomes unbearable unless there is, as there is here, an allegiance to the Church Universal and to Christ, which determines one's attitude towards both groups. In part one of *Encounter with Revolution* the author looks as objectively as possible at the revolution and communism's appeal and betrayal, ending with possible alternatives that are unable to cope with the problem. In part two he suggests a line of conduct for the Christian Church.

This reviewer still has on his shelves three paper-covered booklets reminding him of a previous Quadrennial meeting (500 participants, Wooster, 1943) and the perspectives they opened for him. May the present study booklets also accompany many an Athens participant into his or her ministry, in North America or overseas, but not just as shelf material.

RAY W. TEEUWISSEN.